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Death in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Time

Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture

Edited by
Albrecht Classen and Marilyn Sandidge

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Death in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Time

The Material and Spiritual Conditions of the
Culture of Death

Edited by Albrecht Classen

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Albrecht Classen

Death and the Culture of Death

Universal Cultural-Historial Observations, with an Emphasis
on the Middle Ages

An Introduction

At the risk of carrying the proverbial coals to Newcastle, or owls to Athens, we need to begin this study with a self-evident observation. Two aspects dominate and frame all human life and come and go for everyone, whether they are Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Jews, or atheists, whether they are rich or poor, wise or ignorant, male or female, strong or weak, young or old, etc. We are all born at some point in time, and we all die at some point later in time. Life and death intertwine so intimately that it might sometimes be difficult for an outside observer investigating human culture in the past, such as an historian or a scholar of Religious Studies, to distinguish between them because they happen continuously and do not seem to be really apart from each other in a significant manner within the short time span in human life. Despite this rather cynical perspective, the overarching paradigm of all existence correlates both aspects most deeply. The living do not, of course, comprehend death, and try their utmost to stave it off, but they observe dying all around them incessantly and try to make sense of it, or to cope with death through a myriad of cultural performances. We might even go so far as to identify a large section of human culture originating from the efforts to come to terms with death since it is all-present and makes itself felt all the time behind our own self-imposed mask of vitalism, energy, and health.

This is not to give vent to morbid perspectives, since all culture depends on individual human beings who exist in real terms, grow up, get educated, demonstrate specific skills and abilities, talents and insights, and hopefully contribute to the development of human society in one way or the other. Nevertheless, philosophically speaking, there would not be life if there were no death. It is almost just too banal to confirm this self-evident truth, but it still deserves to be mentioned here: if there were no death, life could not continue since the world would be at a standstill and would quickly grow to its own limits and then consequently implode. But, as a philosophical paradox, then death would reappear after all, so there is no logical way of imagining an existence without death.

The regular disappearance of the living, making room for the next generation, is a most healthy, important law of nature, whether we as the living individuals like it or not. Certainly, there are some living creatures that can grow as old as five thousand years and more, such as a species of pine trees in the White Mountains of Nevada and California.¹ In Europe, many majestic linden trees are as old as one thousand years.² Aspen trees in North America disseminate not through seeds, but through root suckers. Consequently, aspen trees grow in colonies and can survive many thousands of years. As we can read online: “One such colony in Utah, given the nickname of ‘Pando’, is estimated to be 80,000 years old, making it possibly the oldest living colony of aspens. Some aspen colonies become very large with time, spreading about 1 m (3.3 ft) per year, eventually covering many hectares. They are able to survive forest fires, because the roots are below the heat of the fire, with new sprouts growing after the fire burns out.”³ For these trees, then, death has an entirely different meaning than for human beings insofar as time exists for them in an alternative dimension. Many types of animals and reptiles grow much older than people, but then there are many creatures that live just a few months, weeks, or days. Hence, life and time are all relative, whereas death is not; it is the absolute final point of all existence and cannot be disputed, rejected, ignored, or objected to because it automatically concludes a cycle and brings it to an absolute closure, and this sooner or later. Life can be extended by changing the external conditions, but life by itself is always limited, defined by birth, growth, and death. This framework never changes, as we would be justified to argue, based on countless anecdotal and scientific evidence, even if the relationship between the living creature and death changes all the time, with death coming faster or more slowly, with life lasting shorter or longer. Nevertheless, there would not be a cycle without a closure.

However, there are many conditions for people in many different cultures and periods where death is not at all the final point in all being. We regularly

1 Harold C. Fritts, *Bristlecone Pine in the White Mountains of California: Growth and Ring-Width Characteristics* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1969); *The Bristlecone Pine: Nature's Oldest Living Thing* (Ogden, Utah: U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Forest Service, Intermountain Region, [1994]); Gerry Barnes and Tom Williamson, *Ancient Trees in the Landscape: Norfolk's Arboreal Heritage* (Bollington, Cheshire, England: Windgather 2011); Manuel Lima, *The Book of Trees: Visualizing Branches of Knowledge* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2014). See also the excellent survey, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bristlecone_pine (last accessed on Jan. 22, 2015).

2 Alexander Demandt, *Der Baum: Eine Kulturgeschichte*. 2nd, rev. and expanded ed. (2002; Cologne, Weimar, and Vienna: Böhlau, 2014), 4k, 7o, 9n, et passim.

3 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aspen> (last accessed on Jan. 27, 2015).

read or hear about near-death experiences, revenants, ghosts, spirits, and other phenomena that cannot be explained easily, if at all. But those creatures, real or not, that exist between life and death defy our traditionally binary concepts and claim a third space for themselves, forcing us to reflect on the complex meaning of death and an existence beyond its boundaries, as Katharina Baier and Werner Schäfke elaborate in their contribution to this volume, focusing on the large number of Old Norse sagas with their numerous examples of revenants. People have always been aware of or at least projected a whole gamut of beings that have evaded complete death, or are forced to linger on in this life, but outside of their bodies. In many cultures we hear of individuals who are condemned to live beyond death and hence haunt ordinary people in their quest to find rest for their souls. Whether those actually exist or not cannot be determined scientifically, but we can be certain of the concrete existence of an awareness, fear, or admiration of those ‘alternative’ creatures or beings.⁴

The awareness of life and the respective life span differ, of course, from one being to the next, from one social group to the other, and from one culture to the other. But for all creatures the rules stay the same: we are born and bound to die. Like in a chiasm, without death there would not be life, and vice versa, without life there would not be death. The deep fear of death is a useless struggle against the fundamental principles of all existence, which goes in cycles, or rather in spirals, at least sometimes, considering that we develop further, at least as we hope to do, from generation to generation. Whether we actually learn more, improve, or discover new things, here disregarding material conditions where changes happen all the time, is a question which either philosophers or theologians have to answer. But we all need to face this ultimate question, and it might be best to approach it from a historical perspective as well since that provides us with a most useful epistemological lens to study the subject matter more critically.

To reemphasize it, at the risk of sounding repetitive, every individual born here on earth will die. Death and life are intimately connected, depending on each other, as contradictory as they seem to be to each other. Death provides life with a limit; otherwise life might become deflated as a meaningless experience which most living beings would detest as burdensome and disgusting.

⁴ See, for instance, R. C. Finucane, *Appearances of the Dead: A Cultural History of Ghosts* (London: Junction Books, 1982); Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages: The Living and the Dead in Medieval Society*, trans. Teresa Lavender Fagan (1994; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Gero von Wilpert, *Die deutsche Gespenstergeschichte: Motiv – Form – Entwicklung*. Kröners Taschenausgabe, 406 (Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 1994); Roger Clarke, *Ghosts: A Natural History: 500 Years of Searching for Proof* (2012; New York: St. Martin’ Press, 2014).

Growing old without any hope for relief through death would be horrible, as much as people might dread the arrival of death.⁵ We are, as human beings, determined by the limitation of life; otherwise we would have to find an alternative form of existence. Without death there is no life, and, vice versa, without life there is no death. If life were not finite, it would lose much, if not all, of its actual value, to put it in extreme terms.

Of course, people are fully justified in lamenting the passing away of a loved one, and we all know about the meaning of funerals, cemeteries, and the like. In fact, not feeling deep sorrow and pain about the loss of a loved one would be monstrous. The more sophistication a society has achieved, we might say, the more that society has reached new levels of cultural development. The culture of death hence provides us with a measuring stick for human society at large. Studying the way how people approach death, whether they accept it in the first place or try to negate and deny it (foolishly), how they cope with death and come to terms with it proves to be a highly important cultural-historical aspect that deserves careful study, as many medievalists and early modernists, among others, have realized for many years now. We can grasp ancient Greek civilization, for instance, just as much through a close study of how individuals dealt with their lives, created culture, governed, worked, produced, etc., as through an examination of the death culture practiced at that time.⁶ Cemeteries, for instance, reveal much about society and its cultural orientation at large, whether in medieval Europe or early modern Korea.⁷

5 See the contributions to *Old Age in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Interdisciplinary Approaches to a Neglected Topic*, ed. Albrecht Classen. *Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, 2 (Berlin and Boston: de Gruyter, 2007); to *Gutes Leben und guter Tod von der Spätantike bis zur Gegenwart: Ein philosophisch-ethischer Diskurs über die Jahrhunderte hinweg*, ed. Albrecht Classen. *Theophrastus Paracelsus Studien*, 4 (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2012); *Alterskulturen des Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit*. Akten des 16. Internationalen Kongresses Krems 16. bis 18. Oktober 2006, ed. Elisabeth Vavra. Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Realienkunde des Mittelalters und der Frühen Neuzeit, 21 (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2008); *Methoden der Alter(n)sforschung: Disziplinäre Positionen und transdisziplinäre Perspektiven*, ed. Andrea von Hülsen-Esch, Miriam Seidler, and Christian Tag-sold (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2013).

6 Evy Johanne Håland, *Rituals of Death and Dying in Modern and Ancient Greece: Writing History from a Female Perspective* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014).

7 See, for instance, James Stevens Curl, *Death and Architecture: An Introduction to Funerary and Commemorative Buildings in the Western European Tradition, with Some Consideration of Their Settings*. New rev. ed. (Stroud: Sutton, 2002); Roberta Gilchrist and Barney Sloane, *Requiem: The Medieval Monastic Cemetery in Britain* ([London:] Museum of London Archaeology Service, 2005); cf. also the contributions to *Death, Mourning, and the Afterlife in Korea: From Ancient to Contemporary Times*, ed. Charlotte Horlyck and Michael J. Pettid (Honolulu, HI: University of Ha-

There are societies, both in the past and the present, that try to deny or reject death, while there are other societies where death plays a huge role, almost to the disadvantage of the culture of the living. When a foreign society fully embraces death as an integral element, and welcomes it even as a major stepping stone to another existence, which Christians should actually fully comprehend, alterity often sets in and marks profound difference, as in the case of the Toraja in Indonesia, for whom death is a major affair in all of their lives.⁸

Many aspects of economy depend heavily on death, such as when we think of tombstones, the constant care for graves and cemeteries, medallions, flowers, funeral music, sermons (*Leichenpredigten*),⁹ church services, the funeral itself, epitaphs, sarcophagi, etc.¹⁰ In fact, we could already limit ourselves when writ-

wai'i Press: Center for Korean Studies, University of Hawai'i, 2014); Deborah Vischak, *Community and Identity in Ancient Egypt: The Old Kingdom Cemetery at Qubbet el-Hawa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Andrzej Buko, *Bodzia: A Late Viking-Age Elite Cemetery in Central Poland*. East Central and Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 450–1450, 27 (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

8 Edwin de Jong, *Making a Living Between Crises and Ceremonies in Tana Toraja: The Practice of Everyday Life of a South Sulawesi Highland Community in Indonesia* (Leiden, The Netherlands, and Danvers, MA: Brill, 2013); Michaela Budiman, *Contemporary Funeral Rituals of Sa'an Toraja: From Aluk Todolo to "New" Religions* (Prague: Karolinum 2013); Jakob Strobel y Serra, "Der Kuss der Totenschädel," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* Oct. 19, 2014, http://www.faz.net/aktuell/reise/indonesien-sulawesi-13208497.html?printPagedArticle=true#pageIndex_2 (last accessed on Jan. 22, 2015).

9 *Leichenpredigten als Quelle historischer Wissenschaften: Erstes Marburger Personalschriften-symposion, Forschungsschwerpunkt Leichenpredigten*, ed. Rudolf Lenz (Cologne: Böhlau, 1975); Albrecht Classen, "Die Darstellung von Frauen in Leichenpredigten der Frühen Neuzeit. Lebensverhältnisse, Bildungsstand, Religiosität, Arbeitsbereiche," *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung*, *MIÖG* 108 (2000): 291–318. Lenz has published numerous catalogues of those funeral sermons from the early modern age. See also Neil R. Leroux, *Martin Luther as Comforter Writings on Death*. Studies in the History of Christian Traditions, 133 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007).

10 Erwin Panofsky, *Tomb Sculptures: Four Lectures to its Changing Aspects from Ancient Egypt to Bernini* (New York: Harry Abrahams, 1964); Kathleen Cohen, *Metamorphosis of a Death Symbol: The Transi Tomb in the Late Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Berkeley, CA: California University Press, 1973); Helga Wäß, *Form und Wahrnehmung mittelalterlicher Gedächtnisskulptur im 14. Jahrhundert: ein Beitrag zu mittelalterlichen Epitaphen und Kuriosa in Sachsen, Sachsen-Anhalt, Thüringen, Nord-Hessen, Ost-Westfalen und Südniedersachsen*. 2 vols. (Berlin: TENE, 2006); Stephan Elbern and Katrin Vogt, *Wo liegt eigentlich ... begraben?: Grabstätten historischer Persönlichkeiten aus Antike und Mittelalter* (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 2011); see now Christina Welch's contribution to the present volume. For a study of early modern sarcophagi during the age of Confessionalization (16th century), see Oliver Meys, *Memoria und Bekenntnis: die Grabdenkmäler evangelischer Landesherren im Heiligen Römischen Reich Deutscher Nation im Zeitalter der Konfessionalisierung* (Regensburg: Schnell + Steiner, 2009).

ing culturally driven literary history to the topic of death because there does not seem to be anything more important, or more influential, in human existence, and hence human culture, that is, anything more comprehensive, than death, the ultimate challenge, as countless poets throughout time have amply confirmed.¹¹

Of course, by the same token, this position represents an extreme, since a life determined by death would be moribund. But a society bent on extinguishing another whole section through a systematic holocaust, as the Nazis tried to do regarding their Jewish fellow citizens and many others in the 1930s and 1940s, is equally undermining its own existence. This was sheer barbarity, but unfortunately not the only one in recent history, neither before nor after. While writing these lines, horrible news is coming in about genocidal operations in northern Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Tunisia, and Lybia carried out by the terrorist organization ISIS, but there are many other war scenarios today (Spring of 2015) where things do not look much better, such as in northern Nigeria (Boko Haram), or in the Caucasus region, not to mention the countless terrorist attacks all over the world. Life itself does not seem to matter much for those who pursue an extreme form of fanaticism and ideology based on a religious and racial interpretation, and then claim to have political goals which they undergird with their political claims.

As cultural historians we are virtually required to study our subject through the lens of death as well, if not primarily so. The present volume does not claim to embark on virginal land; on the contrary, the topic of death has been addressed already for many decades, and yet we recognize each time that there could be more aspects, more angles to be considered, more features, more texts and art works dedicated to the topic of death, which all add intriguing and important information to the discourse on death in the past, which carries over to our own present. It certainly matters greatly, for instance, how people buried children, women, and men of different social classes at specific times.¹² Through the perspective on death we can understand much better the foundation for religion in a particular period or geographic region, or we can grasp

11 Alois M. Haas, *Todesbilder im Mittelalter: Fakten und Hinweise in der deutschen Literatur* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1989); he discusses medieval thanatology, the culture of dying, poetic representation of death in the early Middle Ages, the death of heroic figures in high medieval literature, death in courtly romances, the role of death in mystical literature, and the strong culture of death in the late Middle Ages.

12 Jan Turek, "Children in the Burial Rites of Complex Societies: Reading Gender Identities," *Child and Childhood in the Light of Archaeology*, ed. Paulna Romanowicz (Wrocław: Chronicon, 2013), 75–87; Aija Vilka, "Some Aspects of Child Burials in the Middle and Late Iron Age (5th–12th c.) in the Territory of Latvia," *ibid.*, 113–35.

the relationship between the genders, the generations, or social classes. Death always lurks around the proverbial corner. Questioning what truly and most deeply mattered to people in life, regarding their material conditions, the political system, their work, and their entertainment, we only need to turn to their experience of death and subsequently their specific culture of death in order to reach most valuable answers.¹³ As Rebecca F. McNamarra and Una McLivenna now emphasize quite correctly:

People in medieval and early modern Europe experienced death and dying differently from the way we do today: the dead formed a more significant social 'presence' for medieval and early modern Europeans, who typically experienced the deaths of family and community members in far greater numbers than their modern counterparts. Rituals of commemoration and remembrance were informed by changing institutional practices within the Church and the royal courts, and they also varied according to local customs. Conceptions of the body and the soul were different, too, influenced by current theological thinking and lay and learned medical practice. The way the dead were categorised varied – certain types of death were criminal or sinful, others were 'good' and noteworthy – and this affected responses to the dead and their surviving families and communities. Emotions were also intrinsic to how people in medieval and early modern Europe prepared for death, said goodbye to loved ones, commemorated their dead, and meditated on life after death. People in medieval and early modern Europe experienced death and dying differently from the way we do today: the dead formed a more significant social 'presence' for medieval and early modern Europeans, who typically experienced the deaths of family and community members in far greater numbers than their modern counterparts.

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13 See, for instance, T. S. R. Boase, *Death in the Middle Ages: Mortality, Judgment, and Remembrance*. Library of Medieval Civilization (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1972); *Dies illa: Death in the Middle Ages : Proceedings of the 1983 Manchester Colloquium*, ed. Jane H. M. Taylor. *Vinaver Studies in French*, 1 (Liverpool: F. Cairns, 1984); cf. also the contributions to *Tod im Mittelalter*, ed. Arno Borst, Gerhart von Graevenitz, Alexander Patschovsky, and Karlheinz Stierle. *Konstanzer Bibliothek*, 20 (Constance: UVK Universitätsverlag Konstanz, 1993); to *Death and Dying in the Middle Ages*, ed. Edelgard E. DuBruck and Barbara I. Gusick. *Studies in the Humanities*, 45 (New York: Peter Lang, 1999).

14 Rebecca F. McNamarra and Una McLivenna, "Medieval and Early Modern Emotional Responses to Death and Dying," *Parergon* 31.2, special issue: *Medieval and Early Modern Emotional Responses to Death and Dying* (2014): 1–10; here 2.

Death in Philosophy, the Arts, and in Public

From time immemorial, philosophers, theologians, artists, poets, musicians, sculptors, and many others have probed deeply and richly the same old question regarding the meaning of life and death. After all, we as human beings feel so helpless and scared in face of the great unknown and hope to make some sense out of our life here on earth before we depart. Of course, all those answers offered throughout time have only been approximations, attempts, theoretical reflections, but they all have contributed to a discourse over the various ages of humanity that is like the base of all human music. Cemeteries are great sites of architectural and art-historical study, especially because they tell us so much about a society's approach to death. But cemeteries can also disappear, when they are ignored, destroyed, or simply replaced for many different reasons. When people move away and leave behind their cemeteries, without anyone taking care of the graves and tombstones, all those cultural objects reflecting their culture of death will soon become decrepit and fall apart, as one can witness today, for instance, in the case of many formerly German cemeteries in Poland many of which are completely overgrown by forest today and hardly visible or even traceable. The Islamic cemetery in Astana, Kazakstan, mostly dating from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, lies next to a busy street and is mostly overgrown and almost forgotten, although it represents some of the oldest cultural objects in that very modern city.¹⁵

Death and the experience of dying itself, however, are not only reflected in tombs, epitaphs, sarcophagi. We find countless representatives of death in paintings, sculptures,¹⁶ in literary texts, in legal and political documents, etc., so there seems to be hardly any other topic of greater relevance for cultural history but death and its cultural representation. Only recently, Amy Appleford published an insightful study on the culture of death as it determined life in London in every regard from ca. 1380 to ca. 1530.¹⁷ Death culture in the seventeenth century

15 <http://astana.gov.kz/en/modules/material/612>; <http://astana.gov.kz/en/modules/material/622> (both last accessed on Feb. 21, 2015).

16 Eleanor Townsend, *Death and Art: Europe 1200–1530* (London: V&A, 2009).

17 Amy Appleford, *Learning to Die in London, 1380–1540*. The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014). While composing these lines, I did not yet have an opportunity to read this new study, but online we find the following abstract: “In fifteenth-century London in particular, where an increasingly laicized reformist religiosity coexisted with an ambitious program of urban renewal, cultivating a sophisticated attitude toward death was understood as essential to good living in the widest sense. The virtuous ordering of self, household, and city rested on a proper attitude toward mortality on the part both of

is also a topic of great concern.¹⁸ And we can easily expand our investigative perspective to any other cultural period to discover that the topic of death had been of supreme importance. Hedonism and the exclusive focus on this life dominates, of course, the culture of certain groups at certain times, but death always arrives after all and forces people to reflect on its nature very extensively.

Death as Memory in Heroic Epics

Death always triggers memory, since we as human beings have a hard time dealing with the loss of loved-ones. Much of medieval literature, for instance, is determined by the quest to remember, to keep the memory of individuals and deeds alive, and both heroic epics, which John Hill discusses in his contribution to this volume, and late-medieval praise poems on the deceased, contributed essentially to this phenomenon, to this deep need for all people throughout time.¹⁹ Because of the importance of the heroic genre at large for our discussion of death in the early Middle Ages, I need to explore these texts as well and to highlight some of the critical features relevant for the discourse on death and the culture of death.

As much as we can approach the entire world of the Middle Ages and the early modern age through the lens of religion, i. e., primarily Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, as much we can also question how much the topics of love, marriage, and sexuality mattered, and when they were raised as public issues in the first place. Finally, we can also gain tremendous insight into medieval and early

the ruled and of their secular and religious rulers. The intricacies of keeping death constantly in mind informed not only the religious prose of the period, but also literary and visual arts. In London's version of the famous image-text known as the Dance of Death, Thomas Hoccleve's poetic collection *The Series*, and the early sixteenth-century prose treatises of Tudor writers Richard Whitford, Thomas Lupset, and Thomas More, death is understood as an explicitly generative force, one capable (if properly managed) of providing vital personal, social, and literary opportunities" (<http://www.upenn.edu/pennpress/book/15304.html>; last accessed on Jan. 22, 2015).

18 Judith P. Aikin, "'ich sterbe': The Construction of the Dying Self in the Advance Preparations for Death of Lutheran Women in Early Modern Germany," *Women and Death*, vol. 3: *Women's Representations of Death in German Culture since 1500*, ed. Clare Bielby and Anna Richards. Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2010), 315–50; Anna Linton, *Poetry and Parental Bereavement in Early Modern Lutheran Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

19 Theodor Nolte, *Lauda post mortem: Die deutschen und niederländischen Ehrenreden des Mittelalters*. Europäische Hochschulschriften. Series I: Deutsche Sprache und Literatur, 562 (Frankfurt a.M. and Bern: Peter Lang, 1983).

modern culture, recognizing the various developments from the seventh and eighth centuries to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, by way of examining how death was viewed, how people engaged with it on a daily basis, and what kind of culture of death they practiced and experienced. In fact, we would have a hard time identifying any narrative text from the premodern period in which a poet or playwright would not address death in one way or the other. The experience of dying and the witnessing of death in concrete terms has always triggered an outburst of emotions, which in turn find reflections in poetic texts, in art work, and in music. Naturally, then, historians of emotions have been at the forefront of research on this large topic, especially when focusing on medieval literary texts.²⁰ In fact, some of the most important contributions to premodern literature owe their monumental quality particularly because of their thematic focus on mourning and the reflection on human grief.²¹ The same applies to art works, such as sculptures and tombs.²² But medical treatises on excessive mourning also existed, implying that medical scholars made serious ef-

20 See, for instance, Peter N. Stearns and Carol Z. Stearns, "Emotionology: Clarifying the History of Emotions and Emotional Standards," *American Historical Review* 90 (1985): 813–36; William M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Barbara H. Rosenwein, ed., *Anger's Past: The Social Uses of an Emotion in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998); Barbara H. Rosenwein, "Worrying about Emotions in History," *American Historical Review* 107 (2002): 821–45; *Codierungen von Emotionen im Mittelalter*, ed. C. Stephen Jaeger and Ingrid Kasten. *Trends in Medieval Philology*, 1 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2003); Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006); Elke Koch, *Trauer und Identität: Inszenierungen von Emotionen in der deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters*. *Trends in Medieval Philology*, 8 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2006); Jan Plamper, *Geschichte und Gefühl: Grundlagen der Emotionsgeschichte* (Munich: Siedler, 2012), to be translated into English as *The History of Emotions: An Introduction*, trans. Keith Tribe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

21 Albrecht Classen, "Mental and Physical Health, Spirituality and Religion in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age: Medieval Answers for Our Future? With Special Emphasis on Spiritual Healing Through Narratives of Mourning: Johannes of Tepl and Christine de Pizan," *Mental Health, Spirituality, and Religion in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age*, ed. Albrecht Classen. *Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, 15 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2014), 1–154. See also the contributions to *Grief and Gender: 700–1700*, ed. Jennifer C. Vaught, with Lynne Dickson Bruckner (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

22 See the contribution to this volume by Christina Welch; cf. also Sophie Jugie, *The Mourners: Tomb Sculptures from the Court of Burgundy*, trans. from the French by Mark Polizzotti (Dallas TX: FRAME/French/Regional/American Museum Exchange; Dijon: Musée des Beaux-Arts, and New Haven, CT: in association with Yale University Press, 2010).

forts to come to terms with this phenomenon in the human psyche as a result of having lost a beloved person.²³

The Old English epic poem *Beowulf* from the eighth century begins with an account of Scyld's, that is, an ancient warrior king's fame and accomplishments as a mighty ruler over the kingdom of Denmark, who then, however, in the prime of his time, passes away and is honorably put to rest along with huge treasures and weapons. Following Old Norse traditions, "They set down their dear king amidships, close by the mast. A mass of treasures was brought there from distant parts. No ship, they say, was ever so well equipped with swords, corselets, weapons, and armour."²⁴ Soon thereafter we hear of another ruler, Beow, who is succeeded by his son Healfdene, who in turn is followed by Hrothgar. The latter achieves great glory and appears to be well established, until he and his men are attacked by the monster Grendel, who kills and devours people.

Beowulf is the only one who can fight him effectively, and he overpowers him, indeed, by tearing out one of his arms out of the socket, which soon leads to his death. Next Beowulf is required to battle against Grendel's mother in a cave deep down in the water of the sea, and miraculously he also overpowers and kills her, but only once he has discovered an ancient weapon strong enough to do the job. In the third and last part, Beowulf has to face the devilish dragon, and this time he ultimately succumbs, yet not without first having killed the dragon with Wiglaf's help. The epic poem concludes with a major funeral in honor of the deceased leader. Death is, so it seems, the hero's reward.

Beowulf's death is a signal message to everyone listening to this heroic epic poem that true warriors fight for their honor and glory, defending the good against the evil, even at the risk of dying in that battle. It also alerts us, however, that the leader deserves his people's full loyalty and respect, and that they should not abandon him in his final, deadly fight, here against the dragon. When death arrives, people have to live up to the ultimate truth of their existence, and this also within heroic society. We will observe this also in the Middle

²³ Naama Cohen-Hanegbi, "Mourning under Medical Care: A Study of a *consilium* by Bartolomeo Montagnana," *Parergon* 31.2, special volume: *Medieval and Early Modern Emotional Responses to Death and Dying* (2014): 35–54.

²⁴ *Beowulf*. A prose translation with an intro. by David Wright (London: Penguin, 1957), 27–28. For the original in a critical edition, see *The Beowulf Manuscript: Complete Texts and The Fight at Finnsburg*, ed. and trans. by R. D. Fulk. Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 2010). The research on this heroic epic is legion, but it would not be necessary to engage with it here in any detail since it would sidetrack us extensively. Moreover, *Beowulf* is such a "classical" text that the few comments about the experience with death contained here should be sufficient.

High German epic poem *Nibelungenlied* (see below). We continue to admire Beowulf until today because of his absolute courage and dedication even, or just because, of the extraordinary threats. While the Geats despair and abandon all hope that Beowulf might come back out of the water, his men hold out and are rewarded with seeing their leader return triumphantly. Later, however, when the protagonist enters the battle against the dragon, his own men display cowardice and flinch, being afraid for their lives. Only Wiglaf is loyal and bold enough to rush to his lord's help, and thus provides him with the crucial assistance in overcoming the monster. There is no glory in fleeing from a danger, whereas the truly virtuous hero accepts his task irrespective of the costs.

This strongly black-and-white picture in *Beowulf* vis-à-vis fighting and embracing death in order to handle even the worst threat becomes much more diversified in the Old French *Roland*.²⁵ Even though the protagonists are supposed to be admired for their physical power and resolution in fighting against a vastly superior Muslim army, there are numerous moments where doubts about the validity of Roland's decision not to call Charlemagne back and help his rear-guard to defend itself arise. In fact, Olivier bitterly complains about Roland's failure and accuses him of hubris in face of certain death.

Tragically, the outcome is fatal for the entire Christian army, and when Charlemagne finally arrives—Roland had eventually been convinced to blow the horn after all and thus to alert his imperial uncle—none of his warriors is still alive. There is no doubt that we are asked to view the Christian heroes with greatest respect, but did they really all have to die? If Roland had not been so arrogant in believing that they all would be strong enough to defend themselves efficiently against the vastly larger Muslim army, their chance for survival would have been considerably larger, and the military triumph and success by Charlemagne would have been virtually guaranteed.

The battle leads to uncountable numbers of dead warriors, who are all deeply grieved at the end, but the anonymous Old French poet does not simply white-wash the protagonist. Death at any cost is no longer the absolute ideal in this case. Of course, this does not diminish Roland's heroic character, especially as he and his comrades probably would have died anyway. But there is no doubt that the number of casualties would have been rather different. On the other hand, Charlemagne's great anguish and pain over having lost Roland and his other paladins enhance his resolve to defeat the Muslims for once and all.

²⁵ *The Song of Roland*, trans. with an intro. and notes by Glyn Burgess (London: Penguin, 1990); see also *The Song of Roland: Translations of the Versions in Assonance and Rhyme of the Chanson de Roland* by Joseph J. Duggan and Annalee C. Rejhon (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012).

And there is no doubt that Roland and his entire army fight most bravely, securing them glory among their posterity, because they both overcome Genelon's treason and their own character shortcomings, fighting resolutely and without any consideration for their own lives.²⁶

The same could be said about the Middle High German epic poem *Nibelungenlied* (ca. 1200), where death occurs all the time and where at the end all of the Burgundians, along with scores of Huns, fall in battle, while Hagen and Gunther are slain by a sword to satisfy Kriemhild's desire for ultimate revenge of her own husband's, Siegfried's, murder.²⁷ As the water nixies inform Hagen considerably later, the very act of crossing the Danube would symbolize their certain death. The protagonists' glory is paid for through their losing their lives. Without the heroic battle they would not be such shining examples and would not enjoy our enduring respect. Of course, the poets do not present their narratives in order to glorify death by itself, but it serves as the crucial catalyst for the heroism to come through.

In most other heroic epics we observe a similar phenomenon, whereas in the Middle High German *Nibelungenlied* the situation is rather mixed. Siegfried, as a semi-god, as we might say, kills and conquers all of his opponents, including a dragon, until he is betrayed by his nemesis, Hagen, who is bent on slaying him in order to get rid of his arch-enemy. Once this killing has happened, his widow Kriemhild is filled with nothing but feeling of hatred for Hagen, and she leads a life entirely determined by the thought of revenge. This ultimately will bring about the death of all of the Burgundians, including Kriemhild, not to mention of virtually the entire Hunnish army. Death determines the entire epic, and we might say that the poet pursued a strategy to illuminate the impact of death on all of society.²⁸

26 Emanuel J. Mickel, *Ganelon, Treason, and the "Chanson de Roland"* (University Park-London: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1989); see now also the contributions to *Approaches to Teaching the Song of Roland*, ed. William W. Kibler and Leslie Zarker Morgan (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2006).

27 *The Nibelungenlied*, trans. A. T. Hatto (1965; London: Penguin, 2004); see also the excellent new edition, *Das Nibelungenlied: Mittelhochdeutsch / Neuhochdeutsch*. Nach der Handschrift B herausgegeben von Ursula Schulz. Ins Neuhochdeutsche übersetzt und kommentiert von Siegfried Grosse (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun. 2010). The text has been discussed already from so many different perspectives that it would be unnecessary to list even a handful of most relevant studies. However, see at least the contributions to *A Companion to the Nibelungenlied*, ed. Winder McConnell. Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 1998).

28 Albrecht Classen, "The *Nibelungenlied*: *The Nibelungenlied*", trans. A. T. Hatto (1965; London: Penguin, 2004); see also the excellent new edition, *Das Nibelungenlied: Mittelhochdeutsch /*

Only in *Diu Klage* do we observe a hint of hope because after all the massive lamentation dead King Gunther's son is crowned as the new king, hopefully avoiding from then on the same mistakes and building a better political alliance to safeguard his people. The culture of death, as portrayed here, altogether decimates everyone, and even engulfs the avenger herself. Kriemhild can ultimately realize her revenge, but at an enormous cost for herself and her entire family, leaving everyone dead.²⁹

Neuhochdeutsch. Nach der Handschrift B herausgegeben von Ursula Schulz. Ins Neuhochdeutsche übersetzt und kommentiert von Siegfried Grosse (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun. 2010). The text has been discussed already from so many different perspectives that it would be unnecessary to list even a handful of most relevant studies. However, see at least the contributions to *A Companion to the Nibelungenlied*, ed. Winder McConnell. Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 1998). Albrecht Classen, "The Nibelungenlied – Myth and History: A Middle High German Epic Poem at the Crossroads of Past and Present, Despair and Hope," *Epic and History*, ed. David Konstans and Kurt Raaflaub. The Ancient World: Comparative Histories (Malden, MA, Oxford, and Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 262–79.

²⁹ Joachim Bumke, *Die vier Fassungen der 'Nibelungenklage': Untersuchungen zur Überlieferungsgeschichte und Textkritik der höfischen Epik im 13. Jahrhundert*. Quellen und Forschungen zur Literatur- und Kulturgeschichte, 8 (242) (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1996); for the English translation, see Winder McConnell, *The Lament of the Nibelungen (Diu Klage)*, trans. and with an intro. Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1994); for a modern German trans. with commentary, see *Diu Klage, mittelhochdeutsch – neuhochdeutsch. Einleitung, Übersetzung, Kommentar und Anmerkungen*. Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik, 647 (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1997). The fact that subsequently another German translation appeared in print, indicates the shifting focus in Medieval German Studies, since the observation of emotions as a major historical aspect increasingly matters in research: *Die Nibelungenklage*. Mittelhochdeutscher Text nach der Ausgabe von Karl Bartsch. Einführung, neuhochdeutsche Übersetzung und Kommentar von Elisabeth Lienert. Schöninghs mediävistische Editionen, 5 (Paderborn, Munich, et al.: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2000). In addition, we have now available a new edition: *Das Nibelungenlied und die Klage nach der Handschrift 857 der Stiftsbibliothek St. Gallen*, mittelhochdeutscher Text, Übersetzung und Kommentar von Joachim Heinze. Bibliothek deutscher Klassiker, 196 (Frankfurt a.M.: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 2013). Cf. also Albrecht Classen, "Trauer müssen sie tragen: Postklassische Ästhetik des 13. Jahrhunderts in der Klage," *Ostbairische Grenzmarken. Passauer Jahrbuch für Geschichte, Kunst und Volkskunde* XLI (1999): 51–68; Elke Koch, "Die Vergemeinschaftung von Affekten in der 'Klage' mit Untersuchungen zur Semantik von 'verklagen' und 'klagen helfen'," *Mittelalterliche Heldenepik – Literatur der Leidenschaften: 11. Pöchlarn Heldenliedgespräch*, ed. Johannes Keller. Philologica Germanica, 33 (Vienna: Fassbaender, 2011), 61–82. As to the relevance of emotions in historical perspectives, see, for instance, Ingrid Kasten, "Rationalität und Emotionalität in der Literatur des Mittelalters," *Wolfram-Studien XX: Reflexion und Inszenierung von Rationalität in der mittelalterlichen Literatur. Blaubeurer Kolloquium 2006*, ed. Klaus Ridder with Wolfgang Haubrichs and Eckart Conrad Lutz. Veröffentlichungen der Wolfram von Eschenbach-Gesellschaft (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 2008), 253–71.

The same outcome could have been the case in the curiously different epic poem *Kudrun* (mid thirteenth century) where fighting and killing is the common *modus operandi*, until finally the female character makes her own decision and turns the tradition of heroic warfare around and replaces it with a marriage policy.³⁰ Her suitor had tried to force her to accept him as her husband, kidnapping her and keeping her as a prisoner for ten years under humiliating circumstances. She is finally liberated by her brother and his army, but she does not seek revenge and instead initiates arrangements to have her former enemy get married with one of her maids.

Peace emerges as the surprising outcome, and the culture of killing and death is laid to rest, at least for the time being. This is the more amazing considering the outcome of the battle between her father and the kidnapper. The latter is so successful that he can basically defeat the major part of the army, killing scores of them, including Kudrun's father. The few survivors and Kudrun's mother have to wait for ten years until the next generation of young men has grown up and is ready to fight. In the final struggle to liberate her, the old warrior Wate would have created a devastating blood bath, but Kudrun intervenes and prevents further killing, thus signaling that under her leadership a new approach to political problems must be pursued, no longer allowing death to rule supreme in that world as the automatic consequence of the principle of revenge.³¹

In Old Norse sagas, such as the *Njal's Saga*, the tragic downfall of major characters, their death, the subsequent blood feud, and an ever growing cycle of killing dominate much of the events.³² In the Old Spanish *El Poema de Mio*

30 *Kudrun*, trans. by Winder McConnell. Medieval Texts and Translations (Columbia, S.C.: Camden House, 1992).

31 Winder McConnell, *The Epic of Kudrun: A Critical Commentary*. Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik, 463 (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1988); Barbara Siebert, *Rezeption und Produktion: Bezugssysteme in der "Kudrun"*. Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik, 491 (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1988); Ann-Katrin Nolte, *Spiegelungen der Kriemhildfigur in der Rezeption des Nibelungenliedes: Figurenentwürfe und Gender-Diskurse in der "Klage", der "Kudrun" und den "Rosengärten" mit einem Ausblick auf ausgewählte Rezeptionsbeispiele des 18., 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*. Bamberger Studien zum Mittelalter, 4 (Münster: Lit, 2002); Kerstin Schmittmann-Ohters, *Poetik der Montage: Figurenkonzeption und Intertextualität in der "Kudrun"*. Philologische Studien und Quellen, 174 (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 2002); Corinna Dörrich, "Die Schönste dem Nachbarn: die Verabschiedung des Brautwerbungsschemas in der 'Kudrun'," *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* 133.1 (2011): 32–55; Anuoluwapo G. Afolayan, *Brautwerbung in der Kudrun: ein Beitrag zur Differenzierung der Frauenbilder am Beispiel Hildes und ihrer Rolle bei der Brautwerbung* (Göttingen: Optimus-Verlag, 2013).

32 *Njal's Saga*, trans. with intro. and notes by Robert Cook (London: Penguin, 1997). For critical approaches, see, for instance, Ármann Jakobsson, "The Impetuousness of Þráinn Sigfússon: Leadership, Virtue and Villainy in Njáls Saga," *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 124 (2009): 53–67; Al-

Cid the protagonist struggles long and hard to establish his own political and military identity, and he is profoundly challenged all the time because the king had exiled him. The crucial juncture in his efforts happens, however, beyond his own scope when his two sons-in-law, the Counts of Carrión, try to murder their wives to avenge their humiliation and exposure as cowards. They fail, however, the two women are rescued, and subsequently a major royal court trial takes place in which the truth is exposed and El Cid's honor is reconstituted, while the Carrións lose entirely and have to return all of their wives' dowries and much more. The two women's near-death, in other words, would almost have brought down the protagonist, but he triumphs and regains not only his honor, but that of his family, and hence the king's love again.³³

We could easily continue with our analysis of heroic epics from the late Middle Ages, and each time we would be able to observe the same or very similar phenomena, the strong emphasis on death and the cultural practices associated with it. Heroism is intimately associated with the question of how the individual approaches death and the natural fear coming along with it. Beowulf, Roland, Siegfried, Rodrigo el Vivar, Njal, or Wölfdietrich always do what they believe is the right thing to do, so they calmly risk their lives in order to achieve what must be done and what they are called upon. Of course, this does not take away the horror of death itself, since the task of fighting against a danger which all other ordinary human beings have failed to face entails almost certain defeat. The hero, however, does not blink an eye and moves ahead, accepting the challenges and disregards the risks because he knows that it is his task and that he is, so to speak, his people's savior, even when he is dying as a consequence of his battle.

But there are negative sides to this cultural concept as well, and hardly any of the heroic epics is free from vestiges of criticism directed against the hero, particularly because they are not afraid of dying, often as a result of their superior strength and previous successes. In the famous Old High German heroic song "Hildebrandslied" (ca. 800–820), father and son encounter each other on the

brecht Classen, "Friends and Friendship in Heroic Epics: With a Focus on *Beowulf*, *Chanson de Roland*, the *Nibelungenlied*, and *Njal's Saga*," *Neohelicon* 38.1 (2011): 121–39; William Ian Miller, "Why is your axe bloody?": A Reading of *Njals Saga* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

33 *The Song of the Cid: A Dual-Language Edition with Parallel Text*, trans. Burton Raffel. Intro. and notes by María Roas Meoncal (London: Penguin, 2009). The critical literature on this 'national' epic of Spain is, of course, legion; see, for instance, Connie Scarborough, *Inscribing the Environment: Ecocritical Approaches to Medieval Spanish Literature*. Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture, 13 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2013), 11–23.

battlefield, both leading their respective armies. They have never met until that moment because Hildebrand had to go into exile with his liege lord Dietrich (Theoderic) before his son Hadubrand had been born. For thirty years he had fought on behalf of the Hunnish King Attila, and now he is entirely in Hunnish gear and carries Hunnish armor.³⁴ Hadubrand does not recognize the older man, and refuses to accept what his opponent indicates in curt and not fully understandable words, i.e., that he is his father. Sailors, whose authority he has accepted all his life, have told him many years ago that Hildebrand had died in an honorable battle. His image and idea of his father is that of a dead man, a person from the past, while he is now a leader of his own army, proud of his accomplishments, as Hildebrand recognizes, evaluating his outer appearance with his new and untarnished weapons and armor.

But Hildebrand still tries to break the communicative deadlock and takes off heavy rings of gold and tries to hand them over to his son as gifts, signaling thus, as he believes, that they are closely related as father and son because he would otherwise not give away such valuable gifts. Unfortunately, Hadubrand does not accept those rings, refusing to take any gifts from his enemy, whom he even accuses of cowardice as a result of his old age. For him those gifts represent bribery, a pay-off for peace, which he as a new leader of his people would never accept. Instead of entering a conversation, the young man gets ready to fight, ready to die or to triumph over his opponent, and Hildebrand, having voiced severe lamentation about his destiny which forces him to fight against his own son, prepares himself. Neither words nor gifts have served their traditional purpose, and death awaits both of them. The fragmentary epic poem concludes with comments about their bloody attacks, but we do not know the outcome.

However, there are only three options, with the son killing his father, the father killing his son, or both dying in this bitter exchange. Peace and survival are not possible for those two individuals, representatives of the old heroic age who fight for their honor at all costs and have upheld the code of the feudal system. While Beowulf in the Anglo-Saxon poem dies an honorable and worthy death while defending his people against the dragon, neither Hadubrand nor Hildebrand can claim something similar and fight simply because they cannot talk to each other, they do not have truly ethical ideals which they might pursue and for which they would accept their possible death, and they seem to be more concerned with their individual status as warriors serving under their

34 *Althochdeutsche Literatur. Mit altniederdeutschen Textbeispielen. Auswahl mit Übertragungen und Kommentar*, ed. Horst Dieter Schlosser (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 2004), 68–71; Albrecht Classen, "Why Do Their Words Fail? Communicative Strategies in the *Hildebrandslied*," *Modern Philology* 93 (1995): 1–22.

lords than with the universal question of how military conflicts could be avoided and peace could be established.

Both men live by the code of honor and they certainly will die by that code as well, and considering that Benedictine monks in Fulda copied this text into a liturgical manuscript, we can be certain that they regarded this poem as an intriguing literary medium to argue against the military mentality prevalent among their parishioners or the heathens of that area. Hadubrand and Hildebrand virtually suffer an ignoble death, senseless and destructive, closing the future since family bonds fail entirely in the face of the military conflict. The fragmentary nature of this epic poem indicates how much the poet/s intended the heroic song as a platform for critical reflections on the 'suicidal' elements of ancient heroism bound up with an extreme adherence to the principles of vassallic feudalism.³⁵

In the Old Spanish *El Poema de Mío Cid* the protagonist struggles for a long time to reestablish himself after having been exiled from the royal court for reasons not fully explained. He proves to be extremely successful and defeats all of his enemies, and is eventually convinced to allow the two Carrión brothers marrying his daughters. But those counts quickly reveal their character weakness and cowardice, which the other members of the court clearly observe. The counts increasingly feel the shame resulting from their own behavior, and try to avenge themselves through an even more shameful act by killing their wives in the most brutal manner.

The question why heroic epics are so focused on death is easy to answer. The hero emerges not in ordinary situations of life, but in extraordinary cases where his (rarely, but still sometimes also her) actions elevate him or her out of the mundane. The risk of death thus proves to be an enormously powerful catalyst for the transformation of life into something meaningful. But medieval heroes were not at all the only ones who incorporated the experience of death so centrally into their existence. By contrast, all people at all times have had to cope with death as the critical limit of all life. Spirituality is predicated on the realization that human life, in its physical dimensions, is always coming to an end because death is taking over. There would not be any culture throughout time all over the world that would not have probed and investigated eschatology.³⁶

35 The entire epic poem could also be read as an example of failed communication that ultimately leads to death; this is the position that I elaborated in a previous monograph: Albrecht Classen, *Verzweigung und Hoffnung. Die Suche nach der kommunikativen Gemeinschaft in der deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters*. Beihefte zur Mediaevistik, 1 (Frankfurt a.M., Berlin, et al.: Peter Lang, 2002), 1–52.

36 See the contributions to *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*, ed. Jerry L. Walls (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); see also Charlotte A. Stanford, "Illness and Death," Eileen Gardin-

While Christians or Muslims, for instance, approach death as the threshold to everlasting life in and with God, non-religious, or secular, approaches to death, such as in the heroic epics, follow actually surprisingly parallel perspectives, since the glory of the hero helps him to supersede the physical limitations of this worldly existence and to achieve meaningfulness. Jerry L. Walls discusses this in light of religious faith: “Eschatological faith, then, is a daring hope, an ‘insane expectation’ that refuses the consolation of stoic resignation in the face of loss and devastation. It dares to continue to believe that our most painful losses, even those due to death, are not irretrievable. ... Eschatological faith dares to believe that our world finally makes sense, that life is fully meaningful.”³⁷

A vast body of older and more recent scholarship has clearly signaled how much the question of the afterlife has occupied medieval and early modern minds. Both religious and secular thoughts—at least in the context of heroic and other secular literature—focused on the scary because ultimately unknown future after death. Virtually every contribution to medieval art and literature addresses apocalyptic and eschatological concerns, whether they come to the surface directly or are hidden in the background of the narratives. For that reason Dante Alighieri’s *Divina Commedia* (completed ca. 1306) can be acknowledged as the true crown and fulfillment of all medieval literature, ultimately addressing the final question of what happens with the soul after the life here on earth, and this in a most concrete sense of the word.³⁸

The question that interests us here is not whether there were eschatological discussions, but what kind of discussions dominated a specific culture. Early Christianity, for instance, was deeply concerned with that, but this did not simply end by the late Middle Ages. The Protestant Church engaged deeply with the same issues, and so did the Puritans, the Jesuits, and so forth.³⁹ We could go so

er, “Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven,” and Richard Landes, “Millenarianism/ Millennialism, Eschatology, Apocalypticism, Utopianism,” *Handbook of Medieval Culture: Fundamental Aspects and Conditions of the European Middle Ages*, ed. Albrecht Classen (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2015).

³⁷ Jerry L. Walls, “Introduction,” *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology* (see note 36), 6.

³⁸ See the contributions to *Last Things: Death and the Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, ed. Caroline Walker Bynum and Paul Freedman. The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000). In the introduction, Bynum and Freedman offer a convenient though brief summary of the relevant research literature from the last several decades. However, heroic literature, and by the same token, courtly and urban literature, not to speak of art history, are missing throughout.

³⁹ Charles E. Hill, *Regnum Caelorum: Patterns of Millennial Thought in Early Christianity*. Sec. ed. (1992; Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2001); for modern approaches, see Ger-

far as to characterize heroic poetry in particular as intimately associated with death, as the *Njal's Saga* illustrates so powerfully. Njal is constantly concerned with settling conflicts between people because he knows so well that they would otherwise try to kill each other. This is so true, especially because he becomes, at the end, a victim of that blood feud mentality as well, though he himself does not fight back and retires to the center of his house where he is burned to death together with his wife and his grandson, suffering from violence and aggression within their society that he had tried to contain and subdue all of his life.⁴⁰

But this was only one aspect of the larger issue focused on death and dying. Both inside and outside of the Church individuals struggled hard to come to terms with death and to make sense out of it, or at least to contextualize it meaningfully so as to allow the survivors to memorialize the dead. One major, but heretofore relatively little studied genre, proves to be the *Libri Vitae*, which were regularly kept in medieval and early modern monasteries, listing the names of the deceased and outlining some biographical information. The monastic community committed itself to say prayers for those deceased who hoped thus to meet a merciful judge on the Day of Judgment.⁴¹ One of the central

hard Sauter, *Zukunft und Verheissung: Das Problem der Zukunft in der gegenwärtigen theologischen und philosophischen Diskussion* (Zürich and Stuttgart: Zwingli Verlag, 1965); Geoffrey Rowell, *Hell and the Victorians: A Study of the Nineteenth-Century Theological Controversies Concerning Eternal Punishment and the Future Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974). In fact, the library shelves are filled with similar studies since the issue itself is endless and ever-challenging.

⁴⁰ Richard F. Allen, *Fire and Iron: Critical Approaches to Njáls Saga* ([Pittsburgh:] University of Pittsburgh Press, [1971]; Lars Lönnroth, *Njáls Saga: A Critical Introduction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976); *Sagas of the Icelanders: A Book of Essays*, ed. John Tucker. Garland Reference Library of the Humanities, 758 (New York: Garland, 1989); Theodore Ziolkowski, *The Mirror of Justice: Literary Reflections of Legal Crises* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997); Theodore Mordock Andersson, *The Growth of the Medieval Icelandic Sagas (1180–1280)* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006).

⁴¹ See the contribution to this volume by Christina Welch. As to the *libri vitae* in the early Middle Ages, see now *Libri Vitae: Gebetsgedenken in der Gesellschaft des Frühen Mittelalters*, ed. Dieter Geuenich and Uwe Ludwig (Cologne, Weimar, and Vienna: Böhlau, 2015). For more information on this genre, especially as it developed in England, see the excellent online article anonymous, “Memoria: Libri Vitae and Confraternity,” https://www.ucl.ac.uk/history/research/monasticarchives/typology/mem_libri (last accessed on April 27, 2015): “That the names of the dead should be entered in a Book of Life – that is to say, in a book recording the names of those who had begun a new life, in Heaven – was mentioned in a letter of Cuthberht, archbishop of Canterbury (740–60); the practice no doubt could be attested at a yet earlier date, if documentation from this period were not so extremely scanty. The making of a whole memorial book (*liber memorialis*), which was called a Book of Life by biblical analogy, is found on the Continent

tasks by the Church was to help people approach death and cope with it in a devout and serene manner, according to the Christian teachings. Both the constructive handling of dying and the cultural expression of the fear of death find their most moving and powerful expression in the *ars moriendi* and the *dance of death*.⁴²

As much as life, culture, philosophy, the arts, and sciences differed in the early modern age (Renaissance) compared to the Middle Ages, the obsession with death and the subsequent culture of death continued throughout the ages. The physical manifestations changed, for sure, such as the burial rituals or epitaphs for the dead rich, especially, but the essential nature of the death experience never differed, even though scholars have made strong cases for the rise, for instance, of a new *ars moriendi* in fifteenth century England and elsewhere.⁴³

Each culture has produced its own architecture of death, and developed idiosyncratic forms of rituals, but the efforts to preserve the memory and to give credit to the deceased in honor of his/her accomplishments and rank all pursued the same goals throughout time.⁴⁴ If we move one level down, away from the larger spiritual, ideological dimensions, and the spectacular forms of dying and burial, we quickly reach the world of the physical responses to death, taking

(at St Peter's abbey, Salzburg, eastern Bavaria) as early as the late eighth century, and it must be likely that by this date it was already under way in England, too, at the leading monasteries."

42 See the contributions to *du guoter tôt: Sterben im Mittelalter – Ideal und Realität: Akten der Akademie Friesach "Stadt und Kultur im Mittelalter" Friesach (Kärnten), 19.–23. September 1994*, ed. Markus J. Wenninger. Schriftenreihe der Akademie Friesach, 3 (Klagenfurt: Wieser Verlag, 1998). The seminal study on this topic continues to be Philippe Ariès, *L'Homme devant la mort*. Univers Historique (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1977); trans. as *The Hour of Our Death*, trans. from the French by Helen Weaver (1981; New York: Vintage Books, 1982). As is typical of Ariès, this book proves to be a treasure trove for countless aspects pertaining to the culture of death, from the early Middle Ages to the nineteenth century. However, we also have to be careful in our assessment of his contribution because the evidence to support his case is not always clearly presented.

43 David William Atkinson, *The English ars moriendi*. Renaissance and Baroque Studies and Texts, 5 (New York, San Francisco, et al.: Peter Lang, 1992). See also Juanita Feros Ruys, "Emotion, Experience, and Learning How to Die in the Late Medieval *artes moriendi*," *Parergon* 31.2, special volume: *Medieval and Early Modern Emotional Responses to Death and Dying* (2014): 55–79. For an excellent collection of relevant texts, see *Tod und Sterben: Lateinische und deutsche Sterbeliteratur des Spätmittelalters*, ed. Hiram Kümper. Texte zur mittelalterlichen Literatur in Stoffgruppen, 1 (Cologne and Duisburg: WiKu-Verlag, 2007).

44 Plinio Prioreschi, *A History of Human Responses to Death: Mythologies, Rituals, and Ethics*. Studies in Health and Human Services, 17 (Lewiston, Queenston, and Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), chpt. V, 203–49.

care of the dead body, dressing it in the shroud, preparing the coffin, arranging the burial site at the cemetery, or the burning of the body and depositing the skull and the other remains in an ossuary, handling last wills, and reflecting on death in poetry and the arts.⁴⁵

The recent discovery (archeological dig between 2010 and 2012) of one of the largest medieval cemeteries in England with ca. 400 complete skeletons and “disarticulated” and fragmented remains of maybe up to 1000 more individuals from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century underneath the Old Divinity School at St. John’s College (built on that site between 1877 and 1879) indicates, for instance, how much we can learn about social and economic conditions in the past. This cemetery had been part of the Hospital St. John the Evangelist established in 1195 by the citizens of Cambridge, and modern archeologists have known about its existence already since the mid-twentieth century, but the recent excavation finally unearthed the true extent of this huge site. Most of the corpses had been buried even without a shroud and so must have belonged to the class of poor people. But they did not die from the Black Death.

The large number of skeletons confirms the significance of this hospital which obviously took care of the needy and indigent members of the community.⁴⁶ “Also of interest to the archaeologists was the relative lack of remains of young women and complete absence of infants, which would normally be expected in a medieval hospital cemetery. Of the remains that could be identified, there seems to have been a roughly equal gender balance, with the majority of individuals having died between around 25 and 45 years old. The lack of young female remains can probably be explained by the Hospital’s Augustinian ordinance from 1250 which established its areas of concern to be ‘poor scholars and other wretched persons’, and specifically excluded pregnant women from its care.”⁴⁷

⁴⁵ See the contributions to *A Réveiller les morts: La mort au quotidien dans l’Occident médiéval*, ed. Danièle Alexandre-Bidon and Cécile Treffort (Lyon: Presses universitaires de Lyon, 1993); Danièle Alexandre-Bidon, *La Mort au Moyen Age: XIIIe–XVIe siècle* (Paris: Hachette Littérature, 1998). The notion of death as a very physical experience expressed through the rotten cadaver, was also formulated in literary texts. See Marjorie Malvern, “An Earnest ‘Monyscyon’ and ‘þinge Delectabyll’ Realized Verbally and Visually in A Disputacion Betwyx þe Body and Wormes. A Middle English Poem Inspired by Tomb Art and Northern Spirituality,” *Viator* 13 (1982): 415–50.

⁴⁶ <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-cambridgeshire-32131379> (last accessed on April 5, 2015).

⁴⁷ <http://www.cam.ac.uk/research/news/archaeologists-unearth-medieval-graveyard-beneath-cambridge-college> (last accessed on April 5, 2015).

As Peter Dinzelbacher alerts us, just as other historians have done so already, medieval cemeteries used to be located next to the central cathedral or church, such as the Campo Santo Monumentale in Pisa, established in 1278, which was the burial ground only for the wealthiest citizens and the mighty clerics. The soil in which the dead were placed, the “terra santa,” was even imported from the Holy Land, and the interior walls were decorated with impressive frescoes showing scenes of the Last Judgment, the triumph of death, and the life of hermits—all appealing to the spectators to prepare themselves in good time here on earth for the afterlife. Death was, overall, as Dinzelbacher underscores, much more relevant for the living during the premodern era than today. And while the living hoped that the dead would assist them through prayers when they ascended to heaven, the dead also needed the living who were supposed to pray for the souls when in purgatory or pay for masses to be read for them.⁴⁸ Essentially, the wall separating life from death was considered highly porous, and the relationship between both spheres was almost something like an osmosis, since both were co-dependent on each other; a good life led to a good death, and the good dead in the afterlife helped the living to lead a good life. The negative, of course, worked the same way, only in the opposite direction: a bad life resulted in a bad death, and a bad dead (in hell) could not help the living either.

Considering the enormous efforts people have always undertaken in dealing with death and handling all the aspects correlated with the afterlife, such as erecting stunning cathedrals,⁴⁹ we might reach the conclusion that the culture of death was almost more important than the culture of life in the premodern world. After all, according to Christian teaching, the physical existence here on earth was only the transitory stage to the afterlife, which mattered profoundly, as Dante’s *Divina Commedia* illustrates so powerfully, apart from countless sermons, meditative poems, and many other theological texts.

Of course, at the end of the Middle Ages the experience of the Black Death, which scholars have studied already from many different perspectives, taking into view not only the tragic events during the years 1347 to 1351, but also the reappearance of this devastating blow to the European population during the following decades, signaled a dramatic change in the attitude toward life in all of its precariousness. While epidemics had already affected the European world once and a while since late antiquity, the situation in the middle of four-

⁴⁸ Peter Dinzelbacher, *Lebenswelten des Mittelalters 1000–1500*. Bachmanns Basiswissen, 1 (Badenweiler: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Bachmann, 2010), 485–89. See also the contribution to this volume by Nurit Golan.

⁴⁹ See the contribution by Rosemarie Danziger to this volume.

teenth century got dramatically worse.⁵⁰ The Black Death did not only rage from ca. 1347 to ca. 1351, but it was a recurrent problem far into the late fifteenth century and beyond.

As much as cultural approaches to death in the early and the high Middle Ages had been well developed and occupied people's minds deeply, the experiences in the late Middle Ages grew considerably worse, enforcing a dramatic change in the general culture of *memoria*.⁵¹ The realization of mortality and

50 Jean-Noël Biraben, *Les hommes et la peste en France et dans les pays européens et méditerranéens*. 2 vols. Civilisations et sociétés, 35 – 36 (Paris: Mouton, 1975); *The Black Death: The Impact of the Fourteenth-Century Plague: Papers of the Eleventh Annual Conference of the Center for Medieval & Early Renaissance Studies*, ed. Daniel Williman. Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 13 (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1982); Barbara Harvey, *Living and Dying in England, 1100 – 1540: The Monastic Experience*. The Ford Lectures, 1989 (Oxford: Oxford Clarendon Press, 1993); Klaus Berdolt, *Der schwarze Tod in Europa: die große Pest und das Ende des Mittelalters* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1994), offers a very systematic overview of how the Black Death affected the various countries in Europe, and of how the universities, the medical profession, the authorities, and merchants and traders reacted to this pandemic. See further Ole Jørgen Benedictow, *The Black Death 1346 – 1353: The Complete History* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, and Rochester, NY: Boydell & Brewer, 2004); John Aberth, *The Black Death: The Great Mortality of 1348–1350: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2005); id., *From the Brink of the Apocalypse: Confronting Famine, War, Plague, and Death in the Later Middle Ages* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010); Andrew Noymer, "Contesting the Cause and Severity of the Black Death: A Review Essay," *Population and Development Review* 33 (2007): 616 – 27. See now Jean E. Jost's contribution to the present volume, focusing on the literary and art-historical works reflecting upon the consequences of the Black Death. This finds further confirmation in the contribution to this volume by Dominique DeLuca. Cf. also Joseph P. Byrne, *The Black Death*. Greenwood Guides to Historic Events of the Medieval World (Westport, CT, and London: Greenwood Press, 2004); see also the contributions to *Pest: Die Geschichte eines Menschheitstraumas* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2005); *Town and Countryside in the Age of the Black Death: Essays in Honour of John Hatcher*, ed. Mark Bailey and Stephen Rigby. Medieval Countryside, 12 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012). Joseph Byrne, *Encyclopedia of the Black Death* (Santa Barbara, CA, Denver, CO, and Oxford: ABC-CLIO, 2012), offers countless brief articles that conclude with helpful bibliographies; but many times the connection between the topics covered here and the central concern, the Black Death, seems rather elusive. Unfortunately, there are numerous errors in the bibliographical details. See now the contributions to *Pandemic Disease in the Medieval World: Rethinking the Black Death*, ed. Monica H. Green, introduction by Carol Symes. The Medieval Globe (Kalamazoo MI: Arc Medieval Press, 2015). *Rethinking the Black Death*, ed. Monica H. Green, introduction by Carol Symes. The Medieval Globe (Kalamazoo MI: Arc Medieval Press, 2015). *Rethinking the Black Death*, ed. Monica H. Green, introduction by Carol Symes. The Medieval Globe (Kalamazoo MI: Arc Medieval Press, 2015).

51 James R. Banker, *Death in the Community: Memorialization and Confraternities in an Italian Commune in the Late Middle Ages* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1988).

the fear of divine judgment mattered greatly, as countless art objects and literary monuments indicate.⁵² Monastic culture, for example, was always deeply concerned with commemorating the dead through obituaries and memorial books, but nevertheless the horror about the ever growing awareness regarding death and its immediate impact on everybody's life starkly differentiate the late from the early Middle Ages.⁵³

Death in the World of the Grail Kingdom

While we might commonly assume that the quest for the Grail in the respective romances (*Perceval/Parzival*, etc.) constitutes the protagonist's path toward life, that is, a new life, almost in a utopian fashion, the opposite also proves to be the case. Wolfram von Eschenbach composed, probably at the end of his life, one of the most gloomy courtly verse narratives in which death dominates all events, as the entire Grail family slowly but surely passes away. In his *Titarel* fragments, composed probably around 1218–1220, so at the end of his life, Wolfram resumes a narrative thread from his *Parzival* (ca. 1205) and outlines what the consequences might be for an individual when communication fails, when love pushes the involved people into the wrong (?) direction, when misunderstandings, excessive curiosity, misconceived ideals of knighthood, and altogether the traditional courtly values threaten to bring about the end of an entire family and/or society.⁵⁴

In *Parzival*, the young protagonist had encountered knight Orilus's wife Jeschute and had taken from her both food and a ring, foolishly following too literally his mother Herzeloyde's advice about how to strive for women's love. When Orilus arrives later, after Parzival's departure, he immediately recognizes that another man had visited his wife's tent, and he rashly accuses her of adul-

52 T. S. R. Boase, *Death in the Middle Ages* (see note 13).

53 Charlotte Stanford, *Commemorating the Dead in Late Medieval Strasbourg: The Cathedral's Book of Donors and Its Use (1320–1521)*. Church, Faith, and Culture in the Medieval West (Farnham, Surrey, England, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011); cf. my review in *Mediaevistik* (forthcoming); see also Thomas A. Prendergast, *Chaucer's Dead Body: From Corpse to Corpus* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

54 Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Titarel and the Songs*. Texts and Translations with Introduction, Notes and Comments by Marion E. Gibbs and Sidney M. Johnson. Garland Library of Medieval Literature, Series A, 57 (New York and London: Garland, 1988); Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Titarel*. Herausgegeben, übersetzt und mit einem Stellenkommentar sowie einer Einführung versehen von Helmut Brackert und Stephan Fuchs-Jolie (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2003).

tery, which was not at all the case. Jeschute has then to go through a long period of horrible suffering until Parzival can redeem her a long time later, first admitting his own guilt (in all innocence), but then defeating his opponent and forcing him to accept his wife again and to acknowledge that she did not commit adultery. Orilus had returned from a joust with a young man, of whom we only know that he died in that fight. Subsequently, however, Parzival encounters his aunt Sigune, who sits on the branches of a linden tree, holding the corpse of her dead lover, Schionatulander, in her lap, a clear echo of the famous figure of the *pietà*. Death is a constant companion in the lives of the protagonists of this and many other Grail romances.⁵⁵

We learn about Sigune and Schionatulander in greater detail only in Wolfram's *Titarel*. This fragmentary poem carries this title because it begins with a reference to the old and subsequently dying Titarel. This man had been the one to whom an angel had originally granted the Grail. He passes the Grail now on to his son Frimutel before his own death. But we are indirectly informed about the latter's death as well. Then the narrative turns to his daughter Schoysiane, who marries Kyot of Katelangen. But then she dies in child bed (stanza 19). Subsequently we learn of the death of other family members and other knights, and the basis for the events as they soon develop, involving Sigune and her lover Schionatulander, is determined by the experience of death. Sigune grows up in the castle of her aunt Herzeloide, whose husband Gahmuret dies in the military service of an Oriental ruler. But that is the material Wolfram informs us about already in his *Parzival*, whereas here he only refers to this account briefly (stanza 37).

The central aspect of *Titarel* surfaces only in the second fragment, or second part, where we encounter Sigune and Schionatulander enjoying time together in a forest clearing, where a loose dog, Gardeviaz, suddenly appears, dragging a long, most fanciful leash behind him, having escaped from his owner during a hunt. After Schionatulander has captured the dog and taken it to his beloved, Sigune is immediately fascinated by this curious object of the leash because she recognizes words and then a whole text written on it by means of gems, telling of tragic love stories. In the name of love young knights entered jousts and suffered their death, whereupon their ladies succumbed to the same destiny out

55 Helmut Brackert, "‘Wer lac an ritterscheft tôt.’ Parzival und das Leid der Frauen," *Ist zwîvel herzen nâchgebûr: Günther Schweikle zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Rüdiger Krüger, Jürgen Kühnel, and Joachim Kuolt. Helfant Studien, S 5 (Stuttgart: helfant edition, 1989), 143–63; Albrecht Classen, *Sexual Violence and Rape in the Middle Ages: A Critical Discourse in Premodern German and European Literature*. Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture, 7 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2011), 7–9, 13, et passim.

of grief: “Florie died in that joust too, although she never came close to the point of a lance” (stanza 148, 4). These accounts intrigue Sigune so much that she becomes impatient and is most eager to read further, so she loosens the knot with which the dog is tied to a tent pole, but this allows Gardeviaz to free himself and run away. Even though Schionatulander tries to follow and to catch him again, the dense forest makes this impossible. He returns to the camp, with his feet and legs badly wounded, the blood on his skin speaking an ominous language, especially because Sigune is also painfully hurt, since the gem-studded leash had run through her palms when she had tried to hold the dog back. Her skin is thus also broken, and both lovers lament each other’s wounds. Those, however, are signals, as the narrator indicates clearly: “Now this story is about to turn bitter” (stanza 163, 2). Sigune demands from her friend that he retrieve the dog and hence the leash for her, since she is most eager to read the rest of the account on it; otherwise he would never gain her love (stanza 166).⁵⁶

The stories about love and death prove to be highly meaningful for her, and she is apparently wondering how they impact her own life, or whether they might help her to understand her love relationship with Schionatulander. Obliging, the young man immediately pronounces his firm commitment to carry out her request, if not command, and readies himself for the quest, but the narrator immediately informs us, without giving any further details, that the outcome will be tragic: “The beginning of much sorrow: how did that end?” (stanza 170, 2).

At this point, however, *Titarel* comes to an abrupt end; Wolfram did not complete it, but it would not have been necessary anyway. We know already, as indicated above, from his *Parzival* that Schionatulander will encounter Orilus, who has caught the dog in the meantime, and refuses to hand it over to the young

56 Larissa Schuler-Lang, *Wildes Erzählen – Erzählen vom Wilden: Parzival, Busant und Wolfdietrich*. D. Literatur, Theorie, Geschichte. Beiträge zu einer kulturwissenschaftlichen Mediävistik, 7 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2014), 191–99, identifies the appearance of the ‘wild’ dog with the mysterious leash as a signal that the two lovers are bound to suffer and to experience an early death as the result of their victimization by the conventions of courtly love service. This would be one possible reading, but Wolfram offered more perspective in this text, focusing, for instance, also on the relationship between reading and death; see my study *Utopie und Logos. Vier Studien zu Wolframs von Eschenbach “Titarel- Fragmenten*. Beiträge zur älteren Literaturgeschichte (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1990); here not consulted; see also Albrecht Classen, *Reading, Writing, and Learning in Wolfram von Eschenbach’s Parzival*, *A Companion to Wolfram von Eschenbach*, ed. Will Hasty. Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1999), 189–202; and my recent article “Die Herausforderung des Begriffes *minne* im Translationsprozess: Theorie des Übersetzens, Sinnfrage und Identitätssuche auf philologischer Ebene: Walther von der Vogelweide (Lyrik) und Wolfram von Eschenbach (*Titarel*),” *Mediaevistik* 27 (2014; appeared in 2015): 45–58.

man. In their subsequent joust, Schionatulander dies, and Sigune has no other chance but to lament his death for the rest of her life. Her reading had tragic consequences; it was too rash, too impatient, and too self-centered. She could not understand the meaning of the dog's name, of the ominous accounts of tragic lovers written onto the leash, and of the signals provided by the bloody wounds on both their bodies, so she fails to heed the warning and thus sends her lover to his death.

Death looms large in premodern literature and the arts, as the Constance public notary Heinrich Wittenwiler (ca. 1400) signals in his only by now famous allegorical romance, *Der Ring*—it has survived in only one manuscript.⁵⁷ As much as the narrator scoffs at the peasant protagonists, the outcome for all of them is tragic and constitutes a true catastrophe. Bertschi Triefnas falls in love with Metzli Rüerenzumpf—both pornographic names (Bert with the Dripping Nose and Marge Touch the Penis)—and woos her, finally being able to marry her. During the wedding festivities, however, conflicts erupt, first just a small scratch wound which one of the dancers causes to his female partner, which is quickly repaid with slaughter, which is repaid by war in which the members of the neighboring village Nissingen who had been invited to the wedding kill everyone in Lappenhäusen, where Bertschi and Metzli had originated from. Only Bertschi survives because he pretends to have lost his mind, so the enemies abandon their siege and do not slay him. But when he comes across the battle field and sees every member of his family and village slaughtered, including his bride, he retires into the Black Forest and ends his life as a hermit, unable to understand the workings of this world.

Wittenwiler does not simply harbor a pessimistic perspective and does not draw a poetic picture of Armageddon. His criticism is directed against the peasant world and their allies, including knights, giants, dwarfs, and witches. The members of the cities, however, wisely refuse to get involved or to take sides, and are thus not affected by the mass killing. They deliberate upon the request to help their friends in the villages, but they realize how foolish that would be

57 Heinrich Wittenwiler, *Der Ring: Text – Übersetzung – Kommentar*. Nach der Münchener Handschrift herausgegeben, übersetzt und erläutert von Werner Röcke unter Mitarbeit von Anika Goldenbaum. Mit einem Abdruck des Textes nach Edmund Wießner (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2012). For the manuscript, now Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cgm 9300, see <http://www.handschriftencensus.de/werke/1897> (last accessed on March 9, 2015). No other author ever referred to Wittenwiler's *Ring* after it had been published, but today we recognize it as a major contribution to late medieval German literature because of its highly provocative satire, sarcasm, and black humor, apart from the universal perspective and wealth of information contained in the text.

and resist the temptation to rush into violence which finds no rational explanation or justification. It might go too far to identify Wittenwiler as a social critic who intended to belittle or to mock the peasant population. Instead, because he composed an allegorical verse narrative of extraordinary proportions, focusing on people who do not know how to communicate well, who are prone to violence, who are rash, indolent, aggressive, and simply foolish, this text is best described as a critic of human failures at large for which the peasants, very much in line with the literary tradition, have to stand in globally.⁵⁸ The poetic outcome might seem excessive and overly drastic, with massive death resulting from one foolish action during a dance, when a man scratches his dance partner in her palm to indicate his emotional attachment, but the poetic warning, in turn, proves to be dramatically clear and evident. Leading a reckless and vengeful life threatens to entail killing and the death of society at large.

It would not be a redundant repetition of our initial reflections, now in light of both Wolfram's and Wittenwiler's works, to confirm how much life and death are intertwined and basically co-dependent. Medieval and early poets addressed this issue most clearly, but artists, sculptors, and composers were equally charged with providing adequate expressions for the huge impact which death has on life and the belief that life can only be carried out successfully and hence meaningfully if it is embedded in the framework of birth and death. The contributors to this volume will offer many individual examples confirming this observation.

Death in the Visual Arts and Architecture

The entire world of medieval art is deeply determined by the image of "The Man of Sorrow" (*Schmerzensmann*), i.e., of the suffering Christ. But the focus never simply rests on the dying or dead body, despite the many wounds and the stream of blood. Instead, the central point always proves to be the symbolic message of the Passion on the cross, or the dying for mankind so that the faithful will expe-

⁵⁸ Eckart Conrad Lutz, *Spiritualis fornicatio: Heinrich Wittenwiler, seine Welt und sein 'Ring'*. Konstanzer Geschichts- und Rechtsquellen, 32 (Sigmaringen: J. Thorbecke Verlag, 1990); Christoph Gruchot, *Heinrich Wittenwiler's "Ring": Konzept und Konstruktion eines Lehrbuches*. Göttinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik, 475 (Göttingen: Kümmerle, 1988); Albrecht Classen, *Verzweiflung und Hoffnung. Die Suche nach der kommunikativen Gemeinschaft in der deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters*. Beihefte zur Mediaevistik, 1 (Frankfurt a.M., Berlin, et al.: Peter Lang, 2002), 401–32.

rience, after their own death, eternal life.⁵⁹ As Maria Constantoudaki-Kitromilides now summarizes poignantly:

The image of the dead Christ was meant to prompt empathy for the Lord's intense suffering, which he endured for the salvation of humankind. In fact, this is a condensed type of the whole Passion of the man Jesus, who died on earth like any human being but whose divine nature led to his resurrection—underscored in the iconography of the Man of Sorrows by his unnatural vertical position in front of the cross. The resurrection of Christ from the dead is the sublime mystery of the Christian religion, offering hope and promising salvation for the soul of every devout Christian. Combining the beliefs in the Passion and in the Resurrection, our image not only served the needs of church teachings and liturgical practice but it also had an unquestionable appeal as an icon for the general audience in both public veneration and private devotion⁶⁰

Indeed, the entire Christian Church and its teachings pertain to the fundamental question how to interpret death and how to understand life in light of death and hence according to Christ's teachings. The transition to the afterlife has always been one of the essential issues of Christianity, as it is in other monotheistic religions, and both the visual arts and architecture have served from early on exceedingly well to provide sensory illustrations of the promise granted to the faithful that there will be life after death. The entire architectural program of the Christian Church is predicated on the firm belief that the soul will be welcomed by God after the body's death if the person's life on Earth had been a good one according to religious principles. Hence, every chapel, church, or cathedral in premodern Europe was a direct response in stone to the universal puzzle of what the end of life will entail.⁶¹ It was there, precisely, where the faithful would prepare for the afterlife, as the entire *Gesamtkunstwerk*, including the altars, the stained glass windows, the sculptures, paintings, and many other elements directly contributed to the illustration of the divine promise of heaven.

Even though modern popular imagination has badly misconstrued the basic function of the crypt, especially in medieval churches, this is the central location for the dead bodies to be placed waiting for the Day of Judgment and hence the Resurrection. Neither the central nave nor the transept, neither the altar space

⁵⁹ *Death, Torture and the Broken Body in European Art, 1300–1650*, ed. John R. Decker and Mitzi Kirkland-Ives. Visual Culture in Early Modernity (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014).

⁶⁰ Maria Constantoudaki-Kitromilides, "The Man of Sorrows from Byzantium to Venetian Crete: Some Observations on Iconography and Function," *New Perspectives on the Man of Sorrows*, ed. Catherine R. Puglisi and William L. Barcham. Studies in Iconography: Themes and Variations (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2013), 147–90; here 148.

⁶¹ This is demonstrated, even though somewhat indirectly, by the contributions to this volume by Rosemarie Danziger and Nurit Golan.

nor the choir, neither the apse nor any other parts of the Romanesque or Gothic church, for instance, was as crucial as the crypt. All hope rested on that space at the very bottom and in the foundation of this religious architecture, as countless examples all over Europe demonstrate most vividly.⁶²

Certainly, death was not something really to be feared, despite all its physical dreadfulness, but something to be looked for since it meant the end of the history of suffering here in this life. Ironically, we might even go so far as to identify Christian culture as one predicated on the experience of death since the soul had to be liberated from the body first before it could transition to heaven, or end up in hell in the worst case scenario, as countless theologians and preachers explicated throughout the entire time period.⁶³

I would not want to complete these initial reflections without referring to a most insightful thought formulated by the major philosopher of the Enlightenment, Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), hence a long time after the Middle Ages and also the early modern age. In the papers filled with personal notes and published only posthumously, he once formulated: “Warum missfällt der Tod, da man doch leben muss, um unglücklich zu sein?” (Why does death displease us since we have to live in order to experience unhappiness?).⁶⁴ This position differs remarkably from those regularly espoused by medieval thinkers, but the emphasis on this life as the one granted by God to people who are supposed to live it to its fullest proves to be not very removed from each other. The dialectics of life and death permeate all culture, although the premodern world might have been more oriented toward the question of how to approach death in a Christian

62 See, for instance, Thomas E. A. Dale, *Relics, Prayer, and Politics in Medieval Venetia: Romanesque Painting in the Crypt of Aquileia Cathedral* (Princeton, NJ, and Chichester, England: Princeton University Press, 1997); Margaret Visser, *The Geometry of Love: Space, Time, Mystery, and Meaning in an Ordinary Church* (Toronto: HarperFlamingo Canada, 2000); Christabel Watson, *The Romanesque Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela: A Reassessment* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2009); Almuth Klein, *Funktion und Nutzung der Krypta im Mittelalter: Heiligsprechung und Heiligenverehrung am Beispiel Italien. Spätantike – frühes Christentum – Byzanz: Reihe B: Studien und Perspektiven*, 31 (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2011); Hubert Wolf, *Krypta: Unterdrückte Traditionen der Kirchengeschichte* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2015).

63 *Räume der Passion, Raumvisionen, Erinnerungsorte und Topographien des Leidens Christi im Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, ed. Hans Aurenhammer and Daniela Bohde. *Vestigia Bibliae. Jahrbuch des Deutschen Bibel-Archivs Hamburg*, 33 (Bern: Peter Lang, 2015).

64 Immanuel Kant, *Köche ohne Zunge: Notizen aus dem Nachlass*. Auswahl und Vorwort von Jens Kulenkampff (Göttingen: L.S.D., 2014), 32. For a thorough discussion of death in Enlightenment philosophy, see Gerald Frankenhäuser, *Die Auffassungen von Tod und Unsterblichkeit in der klassischen deutschen Philosophie von Immanuel Kant bis Ludwig Feuerbach* (Frankfurt a. M.: Haag und Herchen, 1991).

fashion, working toward a ‘good death,’ that is, in the arms of the Church, having made the last confession, received absolution, and then the last unction.

To quote Kant in our context might be historically inappropriate, but his statement intriguingly reflects on the ever ongoing efforts by thinkers throughout time to come to terms with this ineffable phenomenon. But overall, this short remark reminds us how much philosophers throughout time engaged with death and the meaning of life, whether we think of Boethius (d. ca. 525) or Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274).⁶⁵ So, Kant was certainly not the first or the last to make a significant contribution to this discourse.⁶⁶

Nevertheless, to return to medieval and early modern approaches to death, countless examples in secular literature confirm how much people also then were deeply afraid of dying and tried to ignore the ever present death as much as possible, though they were then constantly reminded of the horrifying afterlife in hell and purgatory on a daily basis by representatives of the Church, and found solace only in the thought that a good life here on earth might help the individual soul to enter paradise after all.

Many early modern writers of jest narratives, for instance, reflected on the fear of death expressed by ordinary people. We find good examples, above all, in sixteenth-century jest narratives, such as those composed by the Hessian lansquenet and later castellan, Hans Wilhelm Kirchhof (ca. 1525–1605), in his *Wendunmuth*, which appeared in print between 1563 and 1603 in seven large volumes containing altogether 2083 narratives.⁶⁷ In “Untreuw eines weibs gegen irem

65 Steven Luper, “Death,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, online at: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/death/> (accessed last on March 9, 2015); copyright 2014. See also his monograph, *Philosophy of Death* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009). Cf. further the contributions to *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Death*, ed. Ben Bradley, Fred Feldman, and Jens Johansson. Oxford Handbooks (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

66 *Tod und Unsterblichkeit: Texte aus Philosophie, Theologie und Dichtung vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart*. Vol. 1: *Von der Mystik des Mittelalters bis zur Aufklärung*, ed. Erich Ruprecht (Stuttgart: Urachhaus, 1992). See also the contributions to *Welchen Tod stirbt der Mensch?: philosophische Kontroversen zur Definition und Bedeutung des Todes: Ergebnisse ... der Arbeitstagung “Der Tod als Problem der praktischen Philosophie” ... am 6. und 7. Oktober 2011 in Marburg*, ed. Andrea Esser (Frankfurt a.M.: Campus-Verlag, 2012).

67 Bodo Gotzkowsky, “Volksbücher”: *Prosaromane, Renaissancenovellen, Versdichtungen und Schwankbücher. Bibliographie der deutschen Drucke*. Part I: *Drucke des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts*. Bibliotheca Bibliographica Aureliana, CXXV (Baden-Baden: Valentin Koerner, 1991), 513–16; Albrecht Classen, *Deutsche Schwankliteratur des 16. Jahrhunderts: Studien zu Martin Montanus, Hans Wilhelm Kirchhof und Michael Lindener*. Koblenz-Landauer Studien zu Geistes-, Kultur- und Bildungswissenschaften, 4 (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2009), 64–146. See now also the contributions to *Ordentliche Unordnung: Metamorphosen des Schwanks vom Mittelalter bis*

mann" (Disloyalty of a Wife Toward her Husband, vol. I, no. 350, pp. 390–91), a husband tests his wife's loyalty, pretending that he has died. Lying on the bier, a rooster, whose feathers he had plucked before, approaches the wife who, horrified about the assumed appearance of the embodied death, whispers toward the terribly pained animal to go to her husband and take his dead body instead of her live body. While before she had repeatedly insisted on her love for him which would certainly extend beyond his death, she exposes her hypocrisy now and so receives a bad beating by him subsequently.

Of course, the official Church, whether Catholic or Protestant, viewed death very differently than the broad laity, but both the learned discourse and the general reflections on this last and ultimate experience in human life experienced considerable approximation in the course of time. The need to prepare for death was felt ubiquitously, though the practices and ideas about death certainly different to some extent from culture to culture, and from country to country.⁶⁸ Without going into further details here, we can be assured that the practices of death preparation, burials, and the memorialization of the dead deeply determined sixteenth and also the seventeenth centuries, and we could easily continue with our death-oriented cultural investigations for the following centuries until today. After all, human life finds a unique but powerful expression the way it deals with death via rituals, ceremonies, reflections, memories, buildings, songs, literature, and the visual arts.⁶⁹

Summaries of the Subsequent Contributions

As scholarship has already demonstrated over the decades, the topic of death proves to be most meaningful for cultural and material history. This does not

zur *Moderne*. *Festschrift für Michael Schilling*, ed. Bernhard Jahn, Dirk Rose, and Thorsten Unger. Beihefte zum *Euphron*, 79 (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2014). However, neither Kirchhof nor the theme of 'death' is being addressed by any of the authors.

68 Lorraine C. Attreed, "Preparation for Death in Sixteenth Century Northern England," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 13.3 (1982): 37–66; Craig M. Koslofsky, *The Reformation of the Dead: Death and Ritual in Early Modern Germany, 1450–1700* (Houndmills, England: Macmillan Press; New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000); Andrew Cunningham and Ole Peter Grell, *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: Religion, War, Famine and Death in Reformation Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

69 This is powerfully covered by Hiram Kümper in his excellent research review article, "Death," *Handbook of Medieval Culture*, ed. Albrecht Classen (see note 36), 314–28; see also Eileen Gardiner, "Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven," *ibid.*, 653–73

mean, however, that we have exhausted the issue at hand, as the contributors to this volume demonstrate once again.

John M. Hill illustrates, first of all, how Anglo-Saxon poets reflected on death in their narratives and how they insisted on the great need to memorialize the fallen warriors and kings, which provides cultural history for the audience. In that literary process, the fighting for a good cause and the subsequent death are revived and gain meaning for posterity.

Already within the literary context, both here in Anglo-Saxon poetry and in much of later heroic poetry (see my comments above), the death of the glorified leader results in commemorative acts, including songs, funeral ceremonies, burial, and other dedicatory rituals, such as in *Beowulf* and in *Waldere*. Even though these heroes normally fight all by themselves, in emergencies we also discover how much they depend on retainers, loyal and devoted warriors at their side, which will later find its best expression in the Old Spanish epic *El Poema de Mio Cid*. As Hill alerts us, this kind of heroism carries even an element of divinity in it and correlates the secular with the religious literature of that time. At the same time the notion of revenge is increasingly replaced by the warrior ideal of dying at the side of the lord. However, it seems unlikely that Christian teaching might have been responsible for this new culture of death as it began to dominate the nordic world. Even in the *Njal's Saga* that very struggle is most visible throughout the epic poem.

The extent to which early medieval society, especially in Anglo-Saxon England, was occupied with death and its social implications, finds strong expression in the many wills that have survived from that time. Mary Louise Fellows studies a twelfth-century chronicle of the history of the abbey at Ely and a larger corpus of Anglo-Saxon wills from the ninth to the eleventh century, underscoring how much death and life intertwined in that early medieval world.⁷⁰ But this was not simply a matter of spirituality or faith concerning the afterlife; on the contrary, the central issue pertained to the inheritance and the securing of the family line beyond the generations. Consequently, we often hear of multiple copies of the last will made and the iteration of oral presentation of the last will to ensure that everyone among the survivors was fully considered and that the concerns of

⁷⁰ Even chronicle literature from the medieval and early modern period reflected the extent to which fear of death and mourning of the deceased dominated people's minds; see now Alicia Marchant, "Narratives of Death and Emotional Affect in Late Medieval Chronicles," *Parergon* 31.2, special volume: *Medieval and Early Modern Emotional Responses to Death and Dying* (2014): 81–98.

the entire community were taken into account. The increasing involvement of scribes who translated the oral will into a written will facilitated and strengthened the ritual nature of this essential process before one's death.

As Fellows confirms, will making facilitated the bonding among family and community members, so the moment of death was actually an essential occasion to remind everyone of their social connections and mutual commitments. Moreover, the growing number of wills indicates also the greater need to attach oneself and the own family to the Church by way of reading of masses or praying for the deceased person's soul. Especially the elite Anglo-Saxons were deeply occupied with death and the afterlife and made extensive efforts to plan and organize everything necessary for the time after death.

As I have indicated already above, most, if not all, of medieval church architecture was intimately associated with death as the crucial stepping stone toward the afterlife. The central point in every major church, apart from the altar, was hence the crypt from where the soul of the interred individuals could rise again to heaven. This finds its perhaps most dramatic expression in the famous Abbey Church of Saint-Savin-sur-Gartempe, east of Poitiers, France, consecrated in ca. 1151, which Rosemarie Danziger subjects, once again to a thorough investigation, here especially because of an unusual architectural, or rather visual feature characterizing, a *faux doubleau*—the painted false arch decorated with busts of saints—placed across the barrel vault. The importance of this feature highlights the specific function of this church, serving as a shrine for martyrs. The painted arch, which has puzzled art historians for a long time, could have been placed there because of a miscalculation in the division of narrative registers of the frescoes in the western vault, as Danziger now hypothesizes. But she also suggests, which provides a much more meaningful explanation, that the curious addition of that arch could have served as a significant connector between the important westernmost narthex and the crypt itself, and could thus have underscored the central function of this church for pilgrims to venerate the relics of the two martyred saints interred in the crypt, Savin and Cyprien. While the rest of the vault decorations tell the biblical stories, the painted arch seems to have been intended as a reminder of those martyrs and their suffering in the name of God.

While the ordinary death is actually quite easy to deal with and hence to make it to the study object of historical or mental-historical investigations,⁷¹ the issue be-

71 See the contributions by Christian Böhmer ("Antike"), Peter Dinzelbacher ("Mittelalter"),

comes much more complex in the case of life after death, or of the existence between life and death, either as a ghost or a revenant.⁷² While our modern rational world seems to have moved far away from the belief in such creatures, which I would seriously question, however, in the premodern world we hear often of revenants, for instance. Katharina Baier and Werner Schäffke explore the relevant statements regarding those curious beings contained in the Old Norse Saga literature from the time of conversion, i.e., around the year 1000 C.E. But there are countless other examples of revenant narratives in medieval and early modern European literature, and the variety of them also allows the two authors to discriminate among them and to analyze the specific functions which those half-dead beings assumed or how they were viewed by the survivors in their communities. In many cases the appearance of revenants reflects the new authority position of the Christian church vis-à-vis the old pagan religion, or it speaks to the struggle among various kinship groups for power. Death was not simply death; it has always mirrored social conditions, so we can differentiate among various types, as outlined by Hans-Peter Hasenfratz, whose theoretical approach Baier and Schäffke employ for their social-literary analysis: peaceful death, severe death, and social death. But they also observe that there could be an overlap or an interlinkage among those types of death, depending on the circumstances, such as severe death combined with social death. Consistently, however, the revenants haunt the living, which force the living to take actions against them, either by resorting to Christian rituals or handling those 'ghosts' with the means provided by the pagan religion. The large number of revenants, however, in the Saga literature underscores the great significance which death assumed in that early world.

Slightly moving into a different direction, but still closely connecting with the larger issue of death and the culture of death, Nurit Golan inquires about the iconographic motifs in the sculptural hexameral program of the Freiburg i. Br. Minster (cathedral since 1827) *Unserer Lieben Frau* (Notre Dame). In particular, Golan investigates the surprisingly innovative scientific program in the creation cycle on the tympanum of the north portal of the choir. This portal led in the

and Karl Vocelka ("Neuzeit"), *Europäische Mentalitätsgeschichte: Hauptthemen in Einzeldarstellungen*, ed. Peter Dinzelsbacher. 2nd rev. and expanded ed. (1993; Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner, 2008), 265–313.

⁷² Aline G. Hornaday, "Visitor from Another Space: The Medieval Revenant as Foreigner," *Meeting the Foreign in the Middle Ages*, ed. Albrecht Classen (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), 71–95. See also Nancy Caciola, *Discerning Spirits: Divine and Demonic Possession in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 2003).

Middle Ages to a large cemetery that surrounded the church from all its sides. Contrary to previous research and in light of recent archeological excavations, it is most likely that the graveyard was openly accessible for the entire city population and not only for the clerics. The lay population could thus have easily learned, if they were not encouraged to do so explicitly, the new cosmological concepts of the creation of cosmos as understood at that time from that sculptural program. The reliefs represent the effort to depict the four elements, the planets, and the spheres. These are rather unusual motifs in medieval sculpture art on public display although there are many examples in manuscript illuminations.

As Golan has discovered, in Freiburg the new scientific teachings still under debate by theologians, sometimes even considered heretical (see the condemnation by the bishop of Paris, Étienne Tempier, in 1277, of 219 theses allegedly promulgated by the professors of the university), were boldly embraced by the new patrons of the church, the city council. This went along with the efforts by the Dominicans to educate the urban parishioners, being proud of their own level of intellectual sophistication. Apparently the city council which had commissioned those art works was deeply concerned with having them displayed publicly as a demonstration of their own high level of education and perhaps as a teaching tool as well. This attests, in Golan's opinion, to a change in the status of learning in the fourteen century among city burghers, and thus it is an important document to the intellectual and social development in the urban context. Since the portal opened up toward the cemetery, it seems most likely, as Golan emphasizes, that the experience of death served as the catalyst for the new type of learning available to the urban laity. It was a courageous move to present this new scientific concept in the sculptural program on the outside of the church, but the close association with the cemetery, hence with death, added the necessary dimension of humility in face of the imminent afterlife.

The experience of the culture of death gained explosive intensity in the middle of the fourteenth century when the Black Death suddenly hit Europe. This traumatic experience transformed much of the late medieval world, though it did not bring about a true paradigm shift. Even though about a third of the entire European population succumbed quickly to the plague, neither the social structures nor the general outlook underwent radical changes. However, in terms of mentality, as Jean E. Jost outlines in her article rich in material evidence, the incredible suffering was extensively reflected far and wide, both in literature and the visual arts. Curiously, as is often the case in human history, that time of grief and pain proved to be a highly fertile catalyst for the creation of poetic texts and images determined by strong emotional reactions, both in the religious

and in the secular sphere. Jost illustrates the remarkable shift toward emotions and personal piety in light of the devastating experience with death by way of analyzing numerous literary and artistic masterpieces. As becomes very evident, at least in terms of these two media, the Black Death had, as ironical as it might sound, a tremendously constructive impact. More than ever before people had to engage with death and get involved in a culture of death which continued well into the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Curiously, the experience of death in philosophical terms blurred the separation lines which modern scholarship has liked to draw between the Middle Ages and the early modern age. Specific features certainly reflect new approaches to the body or to nature, but the spiritual dimension behind the representation of Christ's suffering and dying remained the same over time, irrespective of formal modifications.

A critical examination of late medieval art easily yields powerful insights into the binary opposition between life and death as commonly perceived by artists and their patrons. Dominique DeLuca examines various fifteenth-century images portraying, on the one hand, freshly married couples in the youth of their years, or just about to exchange their vows, looking forward to a happy, wealthy, and joyous existence, and on the other, at times even simply on the reverse panel of the image, the shape and form of skeletons (*Bridal Pair* [Cleveland] versus *Standing Rotting Couple* [Strasbourg]). These double macabre portraits reflected profoundly on the blurred boundaries between death and life, which was rather characteristic of late medieval mentality, demonstrating great interest in the questions of how this, earthly, existence was intimately tied in with the afterlife, with both dimensions supporting each other in a subtle but important fashion, basically being co-dependent. The same perspective comes through in the sermons delivered by the chancellor of the University of Paris, Jean Gerson, which Scott L. Taylor discusses in his contribution (see my summary below), but here we face a visual reflection of this intricate concept of life and death, the latter being an endemic aspect of the former.

DeLuca illuminates this approach also through a careful discussion of the double macabre portrait in the Aloisiuskolleg in Bad Godesberg, Germany (ca. 1470), which strongly insinuates how much death is ever-present and thus proves to be an integral element of all existence, as I have explored in the beginning of this study already at greater length. Despite all earthly pleasures, especially those of the flesh, people's true existence rests in the spiritual dimension, which gives death a particularly significant role to play in life, freeing the individual from the material bonds without disregarding the external sphere entirely. Female bodily beauty and the decaying flesh of the dead person are intimately tied together, as many late medieval artists suggested and as we can observe par-

ticularly in the double paintings of the *Bridal Pair* and the *Standing Rotting Couple*, now separately housed in Cleveland and Strasbourg. While the viewer at the original site at first noted exclusively the beautiful appearance of the happy marriage, the negative side on the reverse was only waiting to be discovered immediately thereafter. Life and death hence were, and actually continue to be, simply the other side of the same medal. But late medieval concepts explicitly underscored the need to lead a good life here on earth in order to achieve a good life there in the afterlife. The artists, in other words, did not criticize or condemn the enjoyment of marriage and sexuality, for instance, but deliberately and carefully alerted their viewers to the necessary and automatic metamorphosis of human existence certainly leading to death.

Geoffrey Chaucer, like every other great poet of his time, engaged with the experience of death, especially with the massive death resulting from the Plague, in his own ways. We find an especially intriguing example in his “Pardoner’s Tale” in *The Canterbury Tales*, which Daniel F. Pigg discusses in his contribution. In particular, he focuses on the three rioters who parody the Christian mass by referring to bread and wine and thus mock the Eucharist in a devilish fashion. Following the Plague, there was a virtual inflation of masses read for the dead in Europe, so the culture of death emerged as an institution all by itself with a huge impact on all people. Not surprisingly, sermon literature also witnessed an explosion because there was such an overarching need for spiritual guidance in the face of the ever present death. As a natural consequence, the Eucharist itself gained in religious significance, which subsequently opened the opportunity for its parody as well, as in the “Pardoner’s Tale.” The Pardoner creates, in his tale, a mock mass and insinuates that the rioters consume the Eucharist, but in reality they reveal their murderous instincts as a result of their greed. Nevertheless, as Pigg argues, in that process the Pardoner unearths, perhaps unwittingly, the double function of the Eucharist, taking and giving life at the same time, the first material, the second spiritual. Intriguingly, by way of the deceptive performance and the plotting against each other, the rioters, and hence the Pardoner, exposes the central aspect of the Eucharist, translating the accident to the substance, taking the faithful from this world through death to the new life. The rioters die in the process of the mock mass, and thus become victims of their deliberate misinterpretation of the Eucharist. But this reminds the readers/listeners, of course, that they must embrace death as the only way toward the spiritual afterlife. While mocking the Eucharist, the rioters actually mimic the Black Death and succumb to it themselves. The Pardoner, thus, performs, in a way, the Plague and reflects on its dire consequences, which result from the loss of virtues.

Around 1400 numerous authors anthropomorphized death and have him operate powerfully on the literary stage. In Johannes von Teple's *Ackermann aus Böhmen* (The Plowman from Bohemia) the Plowman, or Everyman, debates with death over the loss of his wife and the meaning of death. Eventually, the latter calms down, begins to inquire what death really could mean, and probes, at least for himself, what life actually entails. God finally decides the debate and grants the Plowman honor, but victory, to be sure, to Death.⁷³ Shortly thereafter, either around 1414 or one or two decades later, a Swabian poet created the debate poem *Des Teufels Netz*, which Albrecht Classen examines in his contribution. Here death rules supreme and has a humongous net in which he captures all the sinful people here on earth and takes them down to hell. Very soon the debate transforms into a universal review of all social classes, age groups, and genders, and takes into view a vast gamut of individual craftsmen, different types of workers, administrators, and others, condemning them all for their sinfulness and projecting that they would be all subject to the devil's fishing with his net.

Even though the anonymous author clearly pursued strongly religious and didactic purposes, the poem ultimately proves to be a mirror of all estates and a literary medium to discuss the multitude of professions both at court and in the city, without ignoring the peasant class altogether. In the name of death, the poet hence resorts to the common discourse on death and yet translates it into a springboard for numerous comments about how people behave, work, think, and perform within their context. While many late medieval poets engaged with the idea of hell and the devil, both instruments of God's justice, *Des Teufels Netz* offers much more insight into the social conditions in the early fifteenth century, illustrating how bakers, shoemakers, goldsmiths, or carpenters work, what tools they use, how they sell their products, and how many of them tend to cheat their customers. While the warning against sinfulness dominates the text in the first place, the poet really reveals his fascination with creating a literary mirror of the material world surrounding him.

73 For the latest text-critical edition, see Johannes de Tepl Civia Zacensis, *Epistola cum Libello ackerman und Das büchlein ackerman. Nach der Freiburger Hs. 163 und der Stuttgarter Hs. HB X 23*. Vol. 1: *Text und Übersetzung*, ed. Karl Bertau. Vol. 2: Karl Bertau, *Untersuchungen* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1994); Albrecht Classen, "Der *Ackermann aus Böhmen* – ein literarisches Zeugnis aus einer Schwellenzeit: Mittelalterliches Streitgespräch oder Dokument des neuzeitlichen Bewußtseins?," *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 110.3 (1991): 348–73; Christian Kiening, *Schwierige Moderne: Der 'Ackermann' des Johannes von Tepl und die Ambiguität historischen Wandels*. Münchener Texte und Untersuchungen zur deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters, 113 (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1998).

Whereas the analysis of *Des Teufels Netz* somewhat removed us from the specific, theologically driven discourse on death and the afterlife—a significant component of the discourse on death in the late Middle Ages in broad terms—Scott L. Taylor brings us back to the central aspect by examining some of the sermons by the famous French chancellor of the University of Paris, Jean Gerson. The latter strongly advocated embracing death as a most important step in human existence, leading from this to the next life. He was, as Taylor notes, a strong proponent of the *Ars moriendi*, suggesting consistently that this material existence is nothing but a prison for the soul; hence approaching death would be tantamount to reaching the gateway toward freedom for the soul, which then could hope to enter heaven.⁷⁴ But the passage to heaven was fraught with numerous difficulties, since sinfulness easily distracted the Christian from his/her straight path. The central function of the Church was, according to Gerson, to assist the individual in doing his/her confession, to provide service during the last hour, and to pray for the soul so that it could pass through purgatory quickly and reach heaven. Of course, many clerical authors throughout the entire Middle Ages and the early modern age engaged deeply with this topic, especially because this was one of the central tasks and functions of the Church, and actually continues to be so until today. But Gerson's theoretical reflections deserve particularly attention because of their erudition, clarity, and far-reaching consequences.⁷⁵

Interestingly, this had extensive implications for Gerson, since he strongly urged all members of the university and the clergy to observe peace and to live a good Christian life so that they would be constantly available for serving the souls by praying for their well-being in purgatory, reading mass, giving gifts, and by doing other good deeds on their behalf. This indicated that for the chancellor the world of the Church and of all the faithful here on earth was intimately tied to the afterlife, since the material existence determined the spiritual one. Prayer, for instance, was of critical importance, at least for those in purgatory, while those condemned to hell did not have any hope and had to suffer eternally. Altogether, as Taylor observes, Gerson projected a community of the living and the dead, since life was a kind of proving ground for the soul in its existence after death. As dreadful as death might seem for the uninformed, it emerges in his thinking as the key to the long desired afterlife, but only if the good Christian had led a proper life.

⁷⁴ See the contribution to this volume by Dominique DeLuca.

⁷⁵ See also Kümper, ed., *Tod und Sterben* (see note 43).

A very different, but highly pertinent issue relevant to the culture of death comes to the surface in Patricia Turning's contribution. While dying and death are commonly treated in a more general sense elsewhere, she turns her critical lens toward a specific case of a woman in Toulouse, Clare de Portet, who was condemned to death by decapitation for her act of adultery with a Bertrandus Savari and then for the murder of her husband in 1428, but her case quickly turned into a legal quagmire pitting the city against the royal authorities which postponed the execution for four years. To execute a woman in the Middle Ages represented a rather exceptional situation, irrespective of the circumstances, here disregarding witchcraft accusations and the like. Women were quite commonly among the convicted criminals, but certainly at a lower rate than men, and we find even fewer examples of women who were subsequently executed. To be sure, decapitation of a female culprit was extraordinary, and yet that was, at the end, Clare's destiny. But in many other cases female criminals were prosecuted according to the laws (often 'running the town'), and Turning cannot confirm, on the basis of her Toulouse records, that gender mattered specifically for the judges in deciding the trial.

Nevertheless, crime and gender are still curiously connected, since women performed differently and commonly received different punishments for their crimes and transgressions. Women convicted of capital offenses were rather buried alive or burned at the stake than to be hanged, probably out of superstitious fear because they were then regarded as associated with the devil and had to be eliminated from the face of the earth. But the specific case of Clare in Toulouse does not reflect any of those concerns, as Turning underscores; instead the legal conflict between the representatives of the crown and of the city exclusively delayed the execution for four years. Ultimately, as this article demonstrates, executions reflected deeply the distribution of public power, and the debate regarding who was entitled to carry it out confirmed how much the culture of death within the framework of legal justice was of supreme importance.

Turning from the deadly serious to the religious-facetious, Sharon King invites us to reflect on the many references to heaven and the divine afterlife as represented in the large corpus of late medieval French farce. The entire world of late medieval and early modern verse narratives and prose stories (jest narratives) teems with allusions to alleged visits of heaven or hell, but the farce brought all this out onto the stage, performing the experience of death most hilariously and thus creating most entertaining scenes predicated on the common culture of death, mirroring fears and hopes by the average person. As King alerts us, the opportunity to poke fun at gullible spectators or ordinary people by way of integrating references to hell was hard to miss.

Many times, adulterous wives manage to trick their husbands, pretending to have been sent to hell because of their slander, while they had witnessed countless jealous husbands condemned down there. Farce authors liked to resort to parodies of biblical Passion scenes to achieve their desired goals to entertain with their plays. Similarly, late medieval literature was filled with accounts of the hellish underworld which increasingly mirrored real society in negative terms, so we encounter countless other examples where the devils assume central positions and operate like regular members of the court, for instance.⁷⁶ As King illustrates most drastically in lucid and yet also hilarious discussion of the various farces, death, hell, heaven, and the transport back and forth to those realms proved to be ingenious material for supreme theatrical staging, portraying people's sinfulness, character weakness, immorality, and, above all, ignorance and stupidity.

But French poets were not the only ones to laugh at death, about death, about the experience of dying, the devil, and about hell. In Fernando de Rojas's *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea* (1499; sec. and full edition in 1502), which Connie Scarborough investigates in light of its information about late medieval culture of death, we observe actually a form of black humor, dealing with the ultimate experience of hanging. There are five specific cases of death in this curious tragic comedy, and none of them conforms to standard categories of good versus evil. We lament over and laugh because of their deaths at the same time, and we are also perplexed at the type of execution which some are suffering since they are, for instance, only servants and yet receive their death penalty as if they were nobles (decapitations), and this after they have already died.

Scarborough suggests that here we encounter an example of grotesque comedy, insofar as the executions are carried out with Calisto's two servants Sempronio and Pármeno. They have already died or are near-dead from their injuries which they suffered after they had jumped out of the window in Celestina's room to escape from the authorities who were alerted to the famous match-maker's murder by Elicia's (one of the prostitutes) shouts. Moreover, the entire love affair, the operation by the match-maker Celestina, the tragic destiny of the servants and other people involved, the reflections by the narrator, and our observa-

76 Albrecht Classen, "The Devil in the Early Modern World and in Sixteenth-Century German Devil Literature," *The Faustian Century: German Literature in the Age of Luther and Faustus*, ed. J. M. van der Laan and Andrew Weeks (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2013), 257–83. See also Robert Muchembled, *A History of the Devil: From the Middle Ages to the Present*, trans. Jean Birrell (2000; Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2003). The critical literature on the devil is virtually legion.

tions of the deadly accidents all combine to make this curious work a masterpiece of late medieval Spanish literature in which sexuality and death uncannily interlace and encourage us to laugh.⁷⁷ Celestina's body is simply hacked to pieces, and the death of the other people is brought about either by suicide or execution, which, because combined, is intended to trigger laughter, both about death and the circumstances that cause death. Scarborough urges us to read the outcome of the *Tragicomedia* not only as a parody of courtly love, but really as a form of black humor, embracing death as a natural aspect of human life which, in a way, does not make sense. Insofar as we are allowed and even encouraged to smile, or perhaps only smirk, in light of the death of all those miserable creatures, death suddenly seems to be a queer entity in human existence.

Following, Christina Welch explores what art historians have to tell us about carved cadaver memorials in late medieval and early modern England and Wales, of which many more have survived the Reformation than previous scholarship has surmised. These memorials depict, in an almost contradictory fashion, the corpses of formerly wealthy and powerful individuals, who are now presented in the most decrepit and morbid fashion possible. With only one exception, all those carved cadavers depict male individuals, but the experience of death presented was a universal one, of course. These so-called *transi*-tombs focus on the most disgusting aspects of the non-decomposed corpse and dramatize highly illustratively how a starkly emaciated corpse looks soon after death, with physical disintegration taking place quickly leaving only the skeleton, almost pursuing a surgeon's perspective. Even though scholars have commonly argued that the iconoclasm of the Reformation era removed and/or destroyed most of those sculptures, Welch has discovered that almost the opposite was actually the case, probably because of the continuous and profound fascination with the culture of death also in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when those sculptures still commanded deep respect.⁷⁸

The cost to produce such memorials was enormous and could be afforded only by the really wealthy clerical elite, members of the landed-gentry, and afflu-

⁷⁷ See the contributions to *Laughter in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times: Epistemology of a Fundamental Human Behavior, Its Meaning, and Consequences*, ed. Albrecht Classen. *Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, 5 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2010).

⁷⁸ For parallel cases and the global discourse on this issue during the sixteenth century, see Kelly Magill, "Living Martyrdom: Interpretations of the Catacombs in Cesare Baronio's Patronage," *Death, Torture, and the Broken Body* (see note 59), 87–115.

ent merchants, and this both in England and Wales, and also on the Continent, each time revealing an astoundingly 'scientific' approach to the physical conditions of the ghastly corpse. Modesty was of no concern in this type of *memento mori*, contrary to the opinions of venerable scholars such as Erwin Panofsky. Welch suggests that the patrons fully embraced the Christian teachings regarding the need to mortify oneself and to accept the transitoriness of worldly glory and physical beauty. Nevertheless, those memorials commonly show the deceased in their political rank, which might underscore the particular depth of their fall from high public positions to the very bottom of all human existence due to their death. The anatomical realism of those memorials, well before the rise of medical anatomy in the sixteenth century, might have been the result of the Southwark artists having had sufficient first-hand experience with actual corpses from a nearby hospital. But the artists and/or patrons did not necessarily aim for verism, but instead relied on such realistic features as symbols of Christian piety and devotion, by then of a Protestant orientation.

Critically important for Welch's argument, most of those memorials were not destroyed during the Civil War, hence did not become victims of iconoclasm. Nevertheless, the total number of those memorials is small (only 41 in total), probably because of the enormous costs in producing them. They reflect the survival of medieval traditions concerning the afterlife in England and Wales beyond the Reformation and the Civil War, reminding the living witnesses to pray for the souls of the deceased in purgatory where they suffered from physical pain until they had become completely skeletal. The memorials for those super wealthy reminded people of the dangers for their souls in this life, which thus allowed a central Christian tenet to continue well into the age of the English Reformation and far beyond.

Literature provides a most useful textual medium to study virtually every aspect of human life, and hence also death, as we have already seen above. Thomas Willard analyzes in his contribution the way how late medieval and early modern English drama performed death on the stage, a significant theme of all pre-modern European drama, both in England and on the Continent. In many respects we might go so far as to associate the emergence of theater plays in the early Middle Ages within the framework of the liturgy with the desire to perform publicly the meaning of death in the Christian understanding. The motif of the Dance of Death was very popular everywhere, and so in England during the late Middle Ages and beyond.

Similarly, Morality Plays were also predicated on the profound realization of death being ever-present and overarching, hence Death was no longer treated simply as an allegory. Hence, at a close analysis, as Willard suggests, Death is

not simply the grim reaper, but mostly appears as God's instrument helping people to move on to the next stage in their existence bringing them closer to the Day of Judgment. Death curiously brings about enlightenment, especially about people's mortality and finite existence here on earth, as numerous sixteenth-century English plays and other texts illustrated, such as Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*.

As the many different plays and other types of texts demonstrate, the perspective of death was highly complex, ranging from being terrifying and horrific if one had led a bad life to being benign and graceful, if one had led a good life. As the many plays by Shakespeare make abundantly clear, life was nothing but precarious, and death ruled supreme, especially in the world of tragedies, hence among the higher aristocracy. Neither political power nor material wealth was a safeguard against certain death, since mortality was the final outcome of them all. As *Measure for Measure* reminds the audiences, death is inevitable, and all efforts to fight it would be futile; certainly a realization that all previous authors had also formulated, though here it comes through perhaps more clearly than before, especially because we are urged to accept the fact that death can come at any time so that it would be best for us to be prepared from early on and to allow the soul's smooth transition out of the body into the afterlife.

But, as Willard emphasizes, the strong emphasis on death in sixteenth and seventeenth-century English drama was not an exclusive phenomenon. Both the severe experience of death in the following centuries and the later theater tradition confirm how much the theme of death continued to occupy people's minds profoundly. After all, as the entire volume underscores, human culture is extensively determined by the daily experience of death and people's responses. Fighting death would be foolish, especially because in most cases death appears as people's friend, not as their foe, allowing them to conclude a miserable existence and to gain spiritual insights that the material framework tends to hide from our mental perspective.

Cyril L. Caspar continues Willard's lines of thought, focusing on the poetry of John Donne and Sir Walter Raleigh, investigating their eschatological perspectives, that is, specifically, their understanding of life as a passage toward death, and hence, as an intermediate stage before hell, purgatory, or heaven, that is, the Last Judgment. In light of the old tradition of the *memento mori*, harking back at least to the seventh or eight centuries, the traditional separation between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance seems rather artificial and heuristically not quite useful. Despite all changes in sciences, in medicine, geography, travel, architecture, and music, the realization that we are all mortal and will have to face our Creator and some point in time remained the same, especially

in early modern English poetry, as Caspar confirms through his critical reading of relevant texts. We are all on a pilgrimage, since life's time frame is very limited and merciless. But instead of despairing over this realization, our task as human beings would hence be to prepare ourselves better for this pilgrimage and leave the straitjacket of this life behind and focus on the real purpose of all existence, the well-being in the afterlife, as John Calvin, Erasmus of Rotterdam, and Thomas Becon argued so persuasively, for instance. As Caspar's discussion reveals, the deeply medieval concept of us being nothing but strangers here on earth who are waiting for our true life to begin after death resonated deeply in sixteenth-century England and well beyond.

This theological position also bore extraordinary fruit in the poetry of John Donne and Sir Walter Raleigh. Donne, in particular, continued with the imagery of the dying body on the deathbed surrounding by a throng of devilish fiends trying to snatch the soul. But he expressed hope that body and soul, both purified, would be reunited after the moment of death had occurred and would be on the pilgrimage to heaven, even though this ran contrary to the Doctrine held by the Church of England. Raleigh painted a quite similar picture, but his emphasis rested on the hope that there would be eternal justice in the afterworld, in and with God. In his poetry we clearly observe how much the good death mattered and that it would mean the most welcome stage during a person's pilgrimage allowing the long-awaited transition to the next, certainly better dimension where spiritual rejuvenation after an earthly life of temptation and potential corruption can be expected.

Moving away from the spiritual-religious approach, taking a good look at the material, medical, and legal conditions of death and dying, Elizabeth Chesney Zegura investigates how women fared (or rather, did not well) within early modern France, as reflected by three diverse witnesses, both factual and fictional, and suffered from death in childbed or committed suicide: Queen Claude (d. 1524), Badebec, the Utopian prince's mother, in chapter 3 of Rabelais's *Pantagruel* (ca. 1532), and the suicide of a young mother following her rape by a Franciscan friar, or Church Father, in *nouvelle* 23 of Marguerite de Navarre's *Heptaméron* (1558/1559). Women's mortality as a consequence of their biological function as mothers, or as victims of male sexual violence, was a terrifying factor and was addressed numerous times in the public discourse.⁷⁹ Unfortunately, of

⁷⁹ See, for instance, the contributions to *Violence against Women in Medieval Texts*, ed. Anna Roberts (Gainesville, Tallahassee, et al.: University Press of Florida, 1998).

course, this was not a particularly unique problem in medieval and early modern Europe,⁸⁰ insofar as women have been commonly commodified by their male contemporaries throughout time—a danger that continues, actually, well into the present era. Moreover, both parturition and pregnancy are dangerous moments even for women in the modern world. Nevertheless, as far as we can tell based on the documents analyzed by Zegura, there was no apparent feminist agenda to fight this commodification of the female body, not even among the women, who globally embraced their purpose in life being that of conceiving and delivering babies. After all, women generally wanted to be mothers, and the great risks involved in pregnancies did not necessarily mean that women automatically enjoyed a shorter life span than men, especially if we think of the fierce competition among men in those patriarchal societies for status and reputation. Further, it would be an erroneous assumption that the premodern world was characterized, on the average, by a dramatically lower life expectancy compared to today.⁸¹

Zegura alerts us to the noteworthy factor that social rank, income, or educational levels had little to do with the actual mortality rates in premodern France. Noble ladies, such as Queen Claude (1499–1524), were just as liable to suffer from early death as ordinary peasant women because even the best midwives or medical doctors could not help in dangerous cases of unfortunate deliveries, for instance. But the gender prejudice was most obvious then, since boys were always more welcome than girls, and this especially among the aristocrats who wanted to have male heirs. Intriguingly, the queen's death granted her a considerably higher degree of respect and admiration by her posterity, which casts the suffering of death itself into quite a different light.⁸² Even though there are differences in King François's reaction to his wife's death compared to a similar situation in Rabelais's *Gargantua*, both the historical account and the literary text reflect the same cultural values in dealing with death, paying respect, mourning, and memorialization of the deceased person. On the surface it seems that the Gargantuan king makes a fool out of himself in his eulogy on his deceased wife Badebec, and as if he then were forgetting about her rather quick-

80 Albrecht Classen, *Sexual Violence and Rape in the Middle Ages: A Critical Discourse in Pre-modern German and European Literature*. Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture, 7 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2011).

81 See the contributions to *Old Age in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (see note 5). Cf. also the detailed and compact article on the same topic by Sarah Anderson, "Old Age," *Handbook of Medieval Culture*, ed. Albrecht Classen (see note 36).

82 See also the contribution to this volume by Christina Welch on carved cadaver memorials in England and Wales.

ly. But Zegura recognizes, even if only subtly, elements of honest feelings of mourning, and urges us to read in this narrative some hidden vestiges of espousal love that extends beyond death, after all, particularly because of Gargantua's inaptness in formulating his sentiments in a polished manner. His swift turning away from the deceased wife to a future spouse has been regarded with ridicule, but it was, as Zegura assures us, a pragmatic attitude typical of the early modern age (and before). At the same time, she recognizes some indications that Rabelais actually satirized the traditional concept of patriarchal succession and focused more on its limitations.

Turning to one of the stories in Marguerite de Navarre's *Heptaméron*, Zegura discusses a highly complex case where an entire family succumbs to death because of foolishness, rashness in thinking and action, excessive grief, and the workings of revenge. Even the newborn dies here, being suffocated by his mother's flailing feet during her own suicide through hanging. In a way she proves to be responsible not only for her own death, but certainly for that of her son, and, indirectly, also her husband's, whom she had sent out to avenge her rape by the Franciscan monk, and whom her brother, later mistaking him for the murderer of his wife and son, would almost have killed in a rash action—he dies, however, from his wounds the next day. Extreme forms of patriarchal honor, lack of emotional self-control, and immoderate passion all lead to the death of the entire family, all victims of a patriarchal system that places greatest value on the family's social standing according to the father's position.

Zeguar suggests that this morbid tale of horror actually reflects the failure of the French state at that time to protect its citizens properly since both the Church and the husbands, here in metaphorical and literal terms, endanger the lives and well-being even of mothers and infants—and this as a consequence of the War of Religions. Even though the wife sends her husband after the rapist, thus causing his death at the hands of his brother-in-law, it is the family's honor that is at stake and that is responsible for the death of all three people.

Finally, in the last contribution to this volume, Václav Grubhoffer moves to the eighteenth century, focusing on medical approaches to death, often associated with the fear of apparent death, or of burying people alive because they seemed to have died a natural death. Most critically for our understanding of the profound changes that affected the approach to death in the modern era proves to be the ever growing professionalization of the medical field and hence of forensic medicine since the seventeenth century. The central question pertained to the issue how to determine absolutely that death had occurred, which thus justified the burial of the dead person. But this was also the time when people became more concerned with the possibility that individuals might not have died

and could recover by themselves. This required the medical profession and others to reflect upon the appropriate measures to help those who were revived. How to determine whether real death had occurred emerged as a tough question which both the health police and medical doctors tried to answer to the best of their abilities.

The more modern medicine progressed, however, the more people listened to anecdotal evidence about apparent deaths and false burials. Consequently, increasingly medical physicians were called upon to study more carefully than ever before whether actual death had occurred or not. Nineteenth-century poets such as Edgar Allen Poe explored this topic in great depth, playing on the assumption that people generally feared being buried while being still alive without anyone else noticing it. Already in the late eighteenth century medical scientists had made significant recommendations regarding the more careful treatment of corpses so as to avoid premature burials. But the many kinds of efforts and recommendations did not result in the actual savings of those who were actually buried still alive.

Nevertheless, since 1784 increasingly attempts were made to move cemeteries outside of the city for hygienic reasons. The Josephine reforms from that time revolutionized the way the dead body was treated, especially since the legislation from 1777, which required that every dead person was to be placed first in a morgue to confirm its absolute death. Many other cities followed this pattern, all of them reflecting the deep concern with the material dimension of death and how to handle it practically.

Conclusion

If we are looking for clear markers determining the separation of the premodern from the modern world, then this new treatment of the dead body might serve well for that purpose, since we are the direct heirs of this perhaps not so 'healthy' paradigm shift, today making death into an antiseptic experience normally people have nothing to do with or really would like to ignore so that their own enjoyment of this life is not undermined or threatened, apart from the requirement to organize the funeral and to take care of the inheritance when another person they are associated with has passed away. The very fear of burying people alive by accident ultimately led to extensive efforts to treat the bodies of apparently dead people in a purely medical and scientific manner, which also, by default, separated the living from the dead in a most radical fashion, insinuating that death did not exist any longer because the modern hospital had completely taken care of it. In other words, the treatment of death in the western

world since the late eighteenth century has often oddly divorced the living from the dead and thus has transformed the experience of death into something people normally no longer witness themselves.

However, we should also not assume that we are completely divorced from the Middle Ages and the early modern age, especially with regard to the experience of and with death. The history of mentality teaches us that we are mostly dealing with a *long durée*, so with a bundle or strands of traditions that continue over the centuries until today despite many metamorphoses.⁸³ This also applies to death and the way how people perceive it or deal with it. Despite all criticism raised against the (Catholic) Church during the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, popular piety was intensive, and pilgrimages and religious services, donations and foundations with a religious purpose were extremely common because people experienced their lives very much in close proximity and as intricately intertwined with death in this pre-Reformation age. This was impressively illustrated in a large exhibition, “Umsonst ist der Tod! Alltag und Frömmigkeit am Vorabend der Reformation” (Death is Free [or perhaps: In Vain?!] Everyday Life and Piety at the Dawn of the Reformation) in Mühlhausen (Sept. 29, 2013 to April 21, 2014), then in Leipzig (June 4 to Sept. 21), and finally in Magdeburg (Nov. 6, 2014, to Feb. 15, 2015).⁸⁴ While pilgrims roamed Europe in large numbers, they did not simply close their eyes to the joys of this life, but combined both dimensions and embraced the integral element of death within their own existence.⁸⁵

83 Death and the culture of death are treated numerous times in *Revelations of the Medieval World*, ed. Georges Duby, trans. Arthur Goldhammer. A History of Private Life, II (1985; Cambridge, MA, and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1988), 52–54, 73, 83–85, et passim. Fernand Braudel, *The Longue durée and World-Systems Analysis*, ed. and with an intro. by Richard E. Lee, with a new translation of Fernand Braudel’s “Histoire et sciences sociales: la longue durée” [1958] by Immanuel Wallerstein (New York: Suny Press, 2012). For a discussion of Braudel’s famous concept of the *histoire de longue durée*, see Bernard Dantier, *Sciences sociales et temps: Fernand Braudel et la longue durée*. Classiques des sciences sociales (Chicoutimi: J.-M. Tremblay, 2005).

84 <http://www.umsonstistdertod.de/> (last accessed on May 7, 2015). This exhibition was accompanied by a hefty and richly illustrated tome, *Alltag und Frömmigkeit am Vorabend der Reformation in Mitteldeutschland*, ed. Hartmut Kühne, Enno Bünz, and Thomas T. Müller (Petersberg: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2013).

85 This is wonderfully illustrated by the pilgrimage author Hans von Waltheym (ca. 1422–ca. 1479): *Ich, Hans von Waltheym: Bericht über eine Pilgerreise im Jahr 1474 von Halle in die Provence*, ed. Birte Krüger and Klaus Krüger. Forschungen zur hallischen Stadtgeschichte, 21 (Halle a.d.S.: Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 2014). But we only need to think of Geoffrey Chaucer, Margery Kempe, or Christine de Pizan to detect many similar voices from that time period, not to

The initial idea for the present volume, after all, was also triggered by the realization how much medieval and premodern cultures still exist in the Southwest of the United States, specifically in southern Arizona, that is, in Tucson. Here the tradition of the *Día de [los] muertos* is very much alive and experiences astounding popularity growing currently in leaps and bounds. Both public parades and art works produced on the occasion of these festivities are amazing evidence how much the culture of death permeates modern life (perhaps once again), especially at the borderlands to Mexico.

For a striking illustration, I add here a recent lithograph by the Tucson artist and silversmith Eugene Michael Contreras, “Day of the Dead Procession To The Santa Cruz River” from 2010 (Fig. 1), which brilliantly and humorously illustrates the amazing continuity of the medieval tradition of the “Dance of Death,” in this case adding a ironic twinkle to the perception of death as an integral part of all human existence. Even though the expansive and highly diverse history of visual representation of death underwent tremendous transformations in the framing of death, in the depiction of the individuals who become victims of death, and in the dramatizations of the experience of death both in Europe and the New World, the existential presence of death has never gone away on either side of the Atlantic.



Fig. 1: Eugene Michael Contreras, “Day of the Dead Procession To The Santa Cruz River,” pen and ink drawing, 2010

Many attempts in the modern world to isolate death and to make it to an anti-septic phenomenon limited to the hospital and the morgue are heavily at work at the present moment, especially in the Western world, but the new, or rather

mention the masses of religious literature produced by the representatives of the *devotio moderna*.

very old, culture of death revived in the practice of the *Día de los muertos* that has strongly entered the United States from Mexico and other parts of Central America, underscores most vividly the lasting influence of the medieval world on the modern world. From an art-historical perspective, with an eye primarily toward the late Middle Ages, Elina Gertsman comments,

In fusing visual, theological, literary, folkloric, and dramatic traditions, the Dance of Death paintings demanded a kinaesthetic mode of looking, offering beholders a foretaste of their last performance, a glimpse of their final dance—the dance with the always mocking, often cruel, and certainly inexorable Death.⁸⁶

However, it might be an ironic twist of the historical development to recognize in this originally Mexican cultural practice of the “*Día de los muertos*,” which nowadays matters so much in the borderlands of the United States and elsewhere, the reintegration of medieval cultures into our postmodern world.⁸⁷ Without going into specific details, we must acknowledge that here we face an enormously productive and fertile syncretism of Latin-American, Mexican, Roman-Catholic, Indigenous American-Indian, and now also US-American cultural traditions. The Mexican tourism industry had heavily advertised the “*Día de los muertos*” as a most characteristic and authentic feature of Mexican culture since the 1970s, but that tradition certainly was practiced much earlier, especially in southern Mexico, but then also in other parts of Latin America.

Nevertheless, Chicano artists have been the initial promoters and advertisers of these festivities in honor of the dead and have contributed to the ever growing

86 Elina Gertsman, *The Dance of Death in the Middle Ages: Image, Text, Performance*. Studies in the Visual Cultures of the Middle Ages, 3 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), 180. See also Susanna Warda, *Memento mori: Bild und Text in Totentänzen des Spätmittelalters und der Frühen Neuzeit*. Pictura et Poesis: interdisziplinäre Studien zum Verhältnis von Literatur und Kunst, 29 (Cologne: Böhlau, 2011); *Memento mori: Der Tod als Thema der Kunst vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart: Ausstellung im Hessischen Landesmuseum Darmstadt vom 20. 9. 1984 bis 28. 10. 1984*, ed. Klaus Wolbert (Darmstadt: Hessisches Landesmuseum Darmstadt, 1984). See also William E. Engel, *Mapping Mortality: The Persistence of Memory and Melancholy in Early Modern England* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995).

87 Regina M. Marchi, *The Migration and Transformation of a Cultural Phenomenon* (New Brunswick, NJ, and London: Rutgers University Press, 2009). See also Shawn D. Haley and Curt Fukuda, *The Day of the Dead: When Two Worlds Meet in Oaxaca* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2004); Cipriano Gutiérrez M. and Leonardo E. Pérez B., *Tradición de día de muertos en México* (México, D.F.: Ediciones CIGUMART, 2004); *The Day of the Dead = Día de los Muertos*, photographs by Denis Defibaugh, text by Ward S. Albro (Fort Worth, TX: TCU Press, 2007); Kristin Norget, *Days of Death, Days of Life: Ritual in the Popular Culture of Oaxaca* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

interest in and fascination with this “Día de los muertos,” as the pen and ink drawing by Contreras signals so powerfully. This cultural event now firmly belongs to the North-American culture as well, not only because of the strong Latino population, but because these processions, accompanied by a huge variety of masks, altar pieces, music, paintings, etc., certainly appeal increasingly also to the mainstream North American population by now more and more consisting of a myriad of ethnic groups.

Originally the festivities were dedicated to the souls of the deceased, hence the “All Saints’ Day” and the “All Souls’ Day” observed on November 1, when Christians were supposed to pray to the saints,⁸⁸ and November 2 respectively, when they were asked to pray for the souls of the dead not yet in heaven, that is, in purgatory.⁸⁹ The All Saints’ Day originated from various sources in late antiquity and was dedicated to those who had attained the beatific vision in Heaven. While that day was originally celebrated on May 13, Pope Gregory IV (795–844) moved it to November 1, because it was easier to feed the faithful coming to church in Fall. Since then it was often called the ‘Easter’ of the Fall season. The purpose was not simply to celebrate all saints, known and unknown, but to glorify the fulfillment of the divine grace. All Souls’ Day was first introduced by Abbot Odilo (994–1041) for the monastery of Cluny, and this custom then spread rapidly, though it was accepted in Rome only as late as in 1311. This religious holiday carried many similarities with Easter since it was carried by the hope for the resurrection of the dead at the Day of Judgment. Many songs and texts normally used for Easter were also used for All Souls’ Day, but it supported, above all, the family over various generations, linking the living with the dead.⁹⁰

The early Spanish missionaries in the New World already encountered a strong indigenous culture dedicated to honoring the deceased, and since they could not eradicate it through their preaching, they simply decided in a surprisingly pragmatic fashion to merge their own Catholic belief system and liturgical calendar with that of the native population, hence grudgingly combined the late medieval tradition with the ancient American culture, hoping thus to build a bet-

⁸⁸ For “All Saints’ Day,” see <http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allerheiligen> (last accessed on April 11, 2015).

⁸⁹ For “All Souls’ Day,” or “Allerseelen” in German; see <http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allerseelen>. See also http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/All_Souls%27_Day (both last accessed on April 11, 2015).

⁹⁰ Th. Schnitzler, “Allerheiligen,” id., “Allerseelen,” *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, vol. 1 (Munich and Zurich: Artemis Verlag, 1980), 428.

ter bridge to their own ‘true’ Christian faith.⁹¹ This process of cultural amalgamation, or acculturation, finds its critical expression, for instance, in the so-called *ofrenda*, a gift for the dead placed on the altar, but also in the ever-growing popularity today of processions with more and more people joining, wearing highly fanciful and imaginative masks and costumes. Unknown to most of them, they directly revive thereby both the medieval and early modern traditions and those from ancient pre-Columbian America.⁹²

Rather curiously, the strong revival, or rediscovery of the “Día de los muertos” today north of the Mexican border is giving rise to long subjugated native cultures in the New World and acknowledges ancient customs and belief systems even in the Anglophone sphere of dominance, although they certainly share, anthropologically speaking, striking parallels with the cultures of late medieval and early modern Europe. From a political point of view Juanita Garciagodoy suggests,

Días de muertos, as practiced in Mexico City, gives evidence of some strands of orphanhood, of eccentricity, of a quest for and construction of identity. As it is lived in the provinces, Días de muertos gives evidence of compromises between the new and the original, the Christian and the Mesoamerican, and of the harmony available on the margins of modernity, out of sight of the sometimes violent hegemonic gaze that would alter what it regards.⁹³

Indeed, both these reflections and the overarching theme and intentions of this book serve not only to uncover a wide swath of culture dedicated to death and its impact in the premodern history, but to lay the foundation for further investigations regarding the intriguing connections between the Middle Ages and the subsequent centuries with us today.

91 Marchi, *The Migration* (see note 85), 12–13. See also Eduardo Andrés Sandoval Forero, *Cuando los muertos regresan: población indígena y festividad de muertos en el Estado de México*. Colección Cuadernos de cultura universitaria, 8 (México: Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México, 1994); Sonia Iglesias y Cabrera, *La celebración de muertos en México* (Mexico: Dirección General de de [sic] Culturas Populares, 1997).

92 *La festividad indígena dedicada a los muertos en México* (Mexico City: Consejo Nacional Para La Cultura Y Las Artes, 2005). See also Stanley Brandes, *Skulls to the Living, Bread to the Dead* (Malden, MA, and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006). The current interest in this old culture in the Southwest of the USA has led to the publication of numerous coffee table books, mostly beautifully illustrated and somewhat well researched; see now Stevie Mack and Kitty Williams, *Day of the Dead Folk Art* (Layton, UT: Gibbs Smith, 2015).

93 Juanita Garciagodoy, *Digging the Days of the Dead: A Reading of Mexico's Días de muertos* (Niwot, CO: University Press of Colorado, 1998), 129.

Acknowledgments

Finally, it is my pleasure to recognize the help and support of many people who made this volume possible. Almost all of the papers were first presented at the eleventh International Symposium on Medieval and Early Modern Studies, which I had organized at The University of Arizona, Tucson, in May 2014. A few of the papers were then not submitted for a variety of reasons, while others entered the picture only after the symposium. Numerous departments and other entities at my home institution, and also the Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, ASU, Tempe, helped with financial support. All contributors were marvelously kind and open-minded when working with me in revising their papers numerous times, and they happily accepted, in the final stages, critical comments by their peer reviewers as well. The editorial staff at Walter de Gruyter in Berlin, especially Dr. Elisabeth Kempf, was incredibly steadfast in their support helping me to get this new volume ready for print, thus extending our book series once again (now volume 16). My admirable co-editor of this series, Dr. Marilyn Sandidge, Westfield State University, was a splendid and most reliable helper and provided invaluable comments and criticism.

This book came to light under very difficult circumstances for me because I was extremely busy at the same time with editing the new *Handbook of Medieval Culture* (2015, 3 vols.) and preparing for print a new monograph, *The Forest in Medieval German Literature* (2015), while teaching full-time and carrying out my regular academic service obligations. Nevertheless, each individual piece was reviewed and revised numerous times until it had reached the necessary maturity, and I greatly appreciate the authors' readiness to accept and consider ever again additional suggestions, comments, queries, and corrections.

I believe that here we have another example of what the premodern world can teach us, reflecting on a further aspect of medieval and early modern culture, specifically focusing on death and the subsequent culture of death. Studying people's approaches to death in the past intriguingly profiles universal and specific aspects with regard to culture, attitude, ideas, and values. Of course, as we have seen above already, the topic itself has been the topic of numerous other studies before, but death represents such a huge challenge in the lives of all people here on earth that we cannot neglect to study this subject matter from ever new angles, here focusing particularly on cultural manifestations in response to death.

I would like to dedicate this book to the memory of my parents Anna Marie (d. 1983) and Traugott Classen (d. 2000), but also to my wife Carolyn and our son Stephan Masao. The past lives through our own existence and becomes the basis



Fig. 2: Skull in the Capuchin Crypt, Vienna, Austria

for the future, and by paying attention to the chain of all human existence, we realize how much death constitutes an essential link for the continuation of all being. Keeping a finger on the pulse of death, if we may say so metaphorically, will give us more profound insights into the workings of life, both in the past and in the present. Those who preceded us continue to live through us, and while we live here, we help the next generation to get ready for their own existence. Life is a cycle, and if we can contribute in at least a minute manner to the continuity of this cycle, we will have not lived in vain.

John M. Hill (U.S. Naval Academy)

Heroic Poetry: Achievement and Heroic Death in Old English Literature

Although not always transparent, in Anglo-Saxon England the culture of death is apparent everywhere, given burial customs and the erection of monuments. Physical burial features are complex and of course change over the centuries from sixth and seventh-century pagan times, as exemplified by the Sutton Hoo ship burial and others, well into the fuller Christianization of Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. Ship burials disappear, although they may not have been numerous; burial mounds yield to Christian graves generally sited west to east or else in alignment with the church¹; grave goods, especially magnificent goods for high status males such as gold buckles, clasps, brooches and other adornments, helmets, spears, elite swords, feasting cups and plates, horns, coins and horse gear, along with animal remains, also give way to more ordinary objects or to none at all. Prestige burials move to the church yard or into the church, accompanied by crosses and stone plaques. The earl Byrthnoth of Maldon fame (991 C.E.) is buried honorably in the church at Ely, with a ball of wax replacing the head severed and taken by his Viking slayers.²

Beowulf records at least three burials observed by nobles and warriors and thus expressing something of their attitudes. All three honor the interred and are set in a pagan past, ostensibly reflecting that past, as imagined from the poet's present. The first is a ship burial, in effect, when Scyld Scefing, the founder of the Danish dynasty leading to Hrothgar and his great hall, Heorot, is sent out to sea in a ship laden with goods over which a golden banner towers. Yet the poet tells us that no one under the heavens knows who or what received that load (ll. 50–52). Scyld Scefing is not a Christian, although his great grandson, Hrothgar, is a monotheist. The ship pushed out to sea is at the least a great honoring, marked by material splendor, and reflecting the mournful respect of Scyld's people. A second burial, in a passage known as the Finn episode, involves placing dead warriors on a funeral pyre; a third is *Beowulf's* funeral at poem's end (discussed below).

¹ Good cultural analysis of these and other burial practices appear in Howard Williams, *Death and Memory in Early Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), especially 135–45.

² See Elizabeth Coatsworth, "Byrthnoth's Tomb," ed. Donald Scragg, *The Battle of Maldon* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), 279–88.

My thesis in this essay is that the burial of a great warrior or king is both a way of honoring him and monumentalizing his achievements—achievements further monumentalized because of the very genre chosen to dramatize those achievements. The poets could have written mere laments or encomia or just matter of fact accounts as in the one-and-a-half lines of prose, out of six, in the Saxon Chronicle entry for Byrthnoth's death, an entry that notes a subsequent policy of tribute payments to Viking raiders. For the chronicler, the sad business of tribute paid to prevent great terror is more important than the Earl's death, although Byrthnoth's death may have encouraged that payment practice, resistance in Byrthnoth's case apparently having proven disastrous in the Chronicler's opinion.³

Beowulf's case differs because his is both story and legend set in an ancient past. Yet Beowulf's death is monumentalized twice: literally in the poem and by way of the poem as heroic genre, the latter being so for Byrthnoth as well, who braves battle against Vikings and dies, although not expecting to when inviting battle, leaving that decision to God. Such poetical monumentalizing by 991 has become part of the literarily inspired culture of death for those who fight, heroic actions in the face of imminent death being imitated by Byrthnoth's loyal retainers, who stay on the battlefield to avenge his death, with vengeance eventually giving way to dying beside their beloved lord. More importantly, those actions of the loyal retainers become a model imitated by later warriors in cognate, literary cultures of the North. However, before giving an account either of how that model forms or of later imitation, we should first establish the poetical genre in question, its lineaments as reflected in the surviving literature of Anglo-Saxon England.

Whether storied in alliterative verse or in efficient prose, the unsaintly, Anglo-Saxon hero is an outsized figure, more powerful and larger than any other; or, if a woman, as in Judith's case, more shinningly beautiful and wise. When dying, the hero dies in a special way, nobly, honorably, and on a high trajectory no matter if criticized. Beowulf is the archetype of that hero, around whom Germanic legendary material clusters: he wears Weland's corselet, compares with Sigemund the dragon slayer, and wields a giant-made sword successfully against Grendel's mother, with which he beheads an already dead Grendel; and of course he fights a fiery dragon, suffering a poisonous, mortal bite in the course of doing so. Moreover, his foster family's losses, especially the accidental

³ See John Earle and Charles Plummer, ed. *Two Saxon Chronicles Parallel* (Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1899), 126.

slaying of one uncle by another, may reflect the death of Baldr.⁴ Judith is his female counterpart in her beheading of Holofernes; and Earl Byrhtnoth, reputedly quite tall, is an Anglo-Saxon historical figure materialized heroically, that is, in respect of a genre of heroic poetry. He is retrospectively given an heroic death in a poem dramatizing his actions at Maldon (991). Despite criticism of him, that death essentially honors him.

Other poetical and prose compositions reflecting that heroic genre include sixty three lines in two fragments of an Old High German poem known in Old English as *Waldere*. There the powerful Waldere, armed with Weland's sword, his father Ælfere's gold-adorned mail shirt, and trust in a God Who is ever resolute in what is Right, challenges his attackers at a mountain pass or perhaps a citadel. Although both of the longer poems, *Maldon* and *Judith*, are incomplete, their plots and *Beowulf's* involve some relationship with the divine, in situations where no one else has triumphed. Always foremost is a need for firm courage, betokening honor and glory, a courage that usually special armor or swords help enable. The poetical genre that exists here even invades prose writing, especially the Saxon Chronicle account of *Cynewulf and Cyneheard*, however partial the configuration. *Beowulf*, that temporally profound meditation on the ethics of kingship, violence and reciprocity in an aristocratic, warrior world, reflects the genre fully. In all cases it is as though the genre, not the verbal medium or any particular attitude, such as fighting at all costs in an unhappy choice of allegiances, is both the message and the chief character's reward.

Courage and special gear matter first with Grendel's ravages in Heorot, for which confrontation Beowulf strips off Weland's mail shirt and puts aside his ornamented sword. For the underwater fight with Grendel's mother in her hall, Beowulf descends fully armored. The intense, ensuing struggle goes badly until Beowulf somehow escapes the mother's attack and sees a gigantic sword. With that sword he kills her and, after searching her hall, beheads an already dead Grendel; then, much later, Beowulf has an iron shield fashioned for facing the dragon. In *Judith*, the heroine responds to Holofernes's tyranny and the demoralizing siege of Bethulia. Because ever faithful, the wakeful Judith receives God's favor when she cries out that she most needs it. This occurs first as God prevents Holoferne's polluting lust, conveyed in phrasing reminiscent of how fate counters Grendel's desires: "Ða wearð se brema on mode / bliðe burga ealdor, þohte ða beorhtan idese / mid widdle ond mid womme besmitan.

4 See Richard North, *The Origins of Beowulf: From Vergil to Wiglaf* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 199–202.

Ne wolde þæt wuldres Dema / geðafian" (ll. 57–60).⁵ Later, after praying, and when, like Beowulf, angry in mind and hot in her breast, she receives help again as she calls for God's vengeance prior to wielding Holofernes's sword. Her mind then enlarges to heroic size ("rume on mode," l. 97) as hope renews itself in her. She seizes Holofernes by the hair in his drunken stupor; she then pulls him forward, shaming him. Skillfully or cunningly ("list") she arranges his body so that she can control it, exposing his neck to the sword. She strikes twice, earning the heroic epithet, woman of courage and strength ("ides ellen-rof"). Thus heroic strength of mind, of wit and of body is hers in this event, God granted. By fighting she has attained illustrious glory ("foremærne blæd," l. 122).

For Byrhtnoth, an historical war-lord who fights for his king, Æthelred, the initiating situation is a Viking threat of bitter, dire slaughter in the late tenth century, met initially by Byrhtnoth's commanding boldness and his skills with shield and sword. He kills Vikings, thanks God for that, before being cut down himself. In all cases, lesser figures matter, both those who are foils to the hero, or accompany him or her, as do Byrhtnoth's trusted retainers, or come to his aid, as Wiglaf does against Beowulf's dragon. A female figure, presumably Hildegund in *Waldere*, urges him on, announcing that now is the day to win long-lasting fame. And Judith has a companion maid who carries a sack into which Judith puts Holofernes's head, the two of them then making their way out of the drink-befuddled, Assyrian camp. Judith triumphantly returns to Bethulia, where she urges the warriors to attack the now leaderless Assyrians. She eventually receives considerable material reward of a martial sort, especially Holofernes's sword, blood-stained helmet, gold-trimmed mailcoat, and many other gleaming treasures, after her people rout the leaderless Assyrians and plunder their corpses. The poem seems to be coming to a close as Judith thanks the Lord of Hosts for her worldly renown and recompense in heaven, the reward of victory, but then the text breaks off. In what we have she does not die, so we cannot be sure how the poem might have ended, although in the Vulgate story she lives chaste for a long time. When she dies she is mourned for seven days. All the time of her post-victory life no one troubles Israel (much as is the case with Beowulf during his fifty-year rule of the Geats). If the Old English poem were to

⁵ All citations are taken from B. J. Timmer, ed., *Judith*. Methuen's Old English Library (London: Methuen & Co., 1966). "Then the ruler of cities grew joyful, he thought with defilement and foulness to stain the bright woman. The glorious Judge would not allow that to pass." The passage in *Beowulf*, lines 706b–707b, tells us the Lord would not allow it ("þa Metod nolde"), that Grendel, the crime-doer, should draw more men into the shadows.

end fittingly, according to the genre, Judith would give her martial goods to a successor or else her people would bury them with her, thus honoring her, and perhaps erecting a monument to her.

Similarly, we do not know how matters turn out for Waldere, although genre-guided surmise suggests two possibilities. While rushing into battle fiercely, Waldere survives, defeating Guthere, who has boasted and unrightfully sought battle, having spurned offerings of sword and treasure (ll. 27–28).⁶ Waldere triumphs gloriously, winning long-lasting fame after Hildegund's prompting, because of his trust in the great sword Mimming, in his father's golden armor, and in God's help for himself. Thanking God for that victory, he and Hildegund prosper somewhere. Because her strong urging differs greatly from comparable moments in the Walter of Aquitaine poem, where she suggests that Walter cut her throat so that she will not, should he lose, suffer the embrace of any other man, and then later, timidly, that Walter flee his approaching enemies, the Old English poem is likely a significant variant in relation to analogues.⁷ Should Waldere lose, he likely dies fighting after being too bold (as in "to fyrenlice," *Waldere*, l. 20) in rushing his enemies, although as hero he would succeed in killing Guthere; after thanking God for his worldly joys, and ministered to by his beloved, now mournful Hildegund, he would first arrange the passing on of his gold and armor, and then his own funeral and perhaps the erection of a monument.

Interactions with lesser figures produce songs of loyalty and show off the hero who, while mortal, is not beyond criticism, thus not deified: there is pride in Byrhtnoth when he invites battle, an excessive attitude that many readers have criticized; moreover, the poet says he yields too much land to the Vikings (at the least a tactical mistake); there is scorn, perhaps almost too prideful, in Beowulf's case as he disdains attacking the dragon with an army (l. 2345); too much battle ferocity in Walter; and a shining beauty that incites lust in Judith's case. The hero lives on a different horizon than mere warriors do, spurning sensible advice, advice reflected only implicitly in *Judith* given the case of doubtful or else wavering watchmen, who just sit, those mournful people ("geomormod," l. 144), awaiting Judith's return from the Assyrian camp. Those watchmen recall the unsure waiting of Beowulf's retainers for his emergence from the blood-suffused lake after the fight with Grendel's mother, as well as the much later wait-

6 I follow the text as given in R. D. Fulk, Robert F. Bjork, and John D. Niles eds. *Klaeber's Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg*, fourth edition (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 337–38. Citations from *Beowulf* are also from this edition.

7 I follow F. P. Magoun's and H. M. Smyser's accounts in *Walter of Aquitaine: Materials For The Study Of His Legend* (New London, CT: Connecticut College, 1950), 16, 31.

ing of those mind-sad (“mod-geomor”) Geats for the return or not of their beloved lord from the dragon fight. But *Judith*, while sporting much heroic diction, especially in depictions of battle, is a hybrid. Heroic, the poem is also a religious narrative of God-given strength and courage against debased power—sharing that connection with *Waldere*, where Walter invokes trust in God’s power against his foes. *Judith*’s diction for God is of a piece with other religious poems and Judith herself is almost goddess-like, being elf-shining, curly-haired, and trinitarian, as well as courageous and wise (ll. 12–14; 77–125).

About Beowulf, whose huge strength has been a potential danger,⁸ Wiglaf gnominically says that often many “eorls” will suffer the will of one. In our case, he continues, we could not dissuade Beowulf from seeking the dragon. Our dear lord, the kingdom’s guardian, held to his high destiny (l. 3084). That destiny first shows itself when wise men among the Geats cast omens, assessing Beowulf’s luck (“hæl”) in his decision to seek out Hrothgar, that battle-king, because Hrothgar has need of men (“manna þearf,” l. 201). Unlike the more personal need in *Judith*, that invoking of “need” in *Beowulf* marks an heroic world obligation on the part of a hugely powerful warrior—the strongest of men in those days of this life. Such “need” calls for help from right thinking heroes and warriors, whether already in a reciprocal relationship with the lord who needs help or not. Danes practice it as their internal custom (l. 1250); concerning “need”, Unferth lends the venom blade, the blood-hardened Hrunting to Beowulf for the watery encounter with Grendel’s mother (l. 1456); Beowulf invokes the obligation when in his leave-taking he promises to return again should Hrothgar have need of men (l. 1835); Wiglaf invokes it in his speech before going to Beowulf’s aid against the dragon (l. 2637); and in Wiglaf’s actions it becomes a point of praiseworthy obligation: such should a man be, a thane in time of need (l. 2709). Having vowed a deed of valor against Grendel, or else end his life in Heorot, Beowulf receives a guardian’s stewardship of the hall. He then, trusting in his great strength and God’s favor, strips down and disarms himself for the expected encounter, putting aside his ornamented sword because chivalrously supposing that Grendel knows nothing about sword fighting. Holy God, he says to his retainers, will decide as He deems best. While waiting for Grendel, all but Beowulf fall asleep. Enraged and awaiting the outcome of battle, he keeps an heroic wakefulness (much as Judith is awake when the drunken Holofernes is not). Afterwards, Beowulf apologizes for failing to keep Grendel in the

⁸ Scott Gwara, *Heroic Identity in the World of Beowulf*. Medieval and Renaissance Authors and Texts, 2 (Leiden and Bosten: Brill, 2008) has deftly pursued this line of interpretation, finding Beowulf a more problematic figure than do many readers.

hall; God did not will it. However, he is sure that, having left arm and shoulder behind, Grendel is in death's grip and, dead, will have to await God's judgment. The great hero, for all his strengths of mind and body, is appropriately aware of a greater power, here as elsewhere, although he says nothing of the sort before seeking out Grendel's mother (that point is left, for a later moment, and for the poet, ll. 1553–55).

We know from Beowulf's perspective that he both scorned to meet the dragon and considered the fateful moment at hand his alone—a luck (*"hælo"*) he has somehow drawn for himself, wishing better luck for his dear men (l. 2418), whom he would keep safe from harm (l. 2529), having them observe who will better survive the rush of battle. While this luck now differs greatly in feel from those omens wise men among the Geats read a long time ago, it is not a judgment. Though sensing the nearness of death, Beowulf heroically steels himself for the occasion. He will not retreat a foot nor will he, while resolute in spirit, boast against the dragon.

When Beowulf and Wiglaf combine to kill the dragon, Beowulf having suffered a terrible wound, we are told that this is the last time of victory (l. 2710) for that lord. Though a combined effort, this is Beowulf's victory. His becomes, then, an heroic death in the final minutes of which he, described as wise-minded (*"wishygend,"* l. 2716), first observes the scene, contemplating the giant stonework around the mouth of the dragon's cave, seemingly solid forever, as man's life is not. We learn then that Wiglaf bathes the swelling, poisoned wound of his weakening, dear lord, removing Beowulf's helmet. That intimate, heart-felt tending moves Beowulf to speak in the sad knowledge that he has reached the end of his days, the end of earth's joys. Never a stupendously powerful idiot, Beowulf now offers something more than a fierce warrior's death quip. His is a hero's last will and testament, beginning with the thought that he would give his battle gear to a son, if he had one of his body. He then rouses himself to assert how well he ruled his people for fifty years—a momentary assertion of self against imminent mortality. No king among surrounding peoples, he adds, dared try battle terror against him. His fifty years were largely ones, then, of domestic rule, the ethical quality of which is a source of pride: he held his own well, neither seeking contentious intrigue (*"searoniðas,"* l. 2738) nor swearing false oaths. In the dragon's case he does indeed seek a contentious creature l. 3067), the treasure mound's guardian, which, however, violates neither promises nor oaths. Although sick with his death wound, he ethically reflects upon his rule. The Ruler of men need not charge him, he says, with the baleful murder of kin, apparently what intrigue and false oaths would lead to or involve.

Satisfied with that, he has now a pressing concern: that Wiglaf bring up some of the dragon's treasure so that by looking upon that wealth he can more easily give up life and long rule. When Wiglaf returns with an armful of cups, dishes and the brightest of battle standards, perhaps choosing the latter to especially honor his great lord, Beowulf, who now weakening further and described as old in his pain, thanks the Lord, the King of Glories, the eternal Lord for what he sees, for what he has gained. This full statement comes close to religious exultation as Beowulf takes pleasure in having acquired such treasures for his people before he dies ("minum leodum," l. 2799). His people are much on his mind, the phrase repeating a few lines later as Beowulf utters his next and penultimate concern—that Wiglaf should have a barrow erected for him on Whale's Cliff, a memorial for his people. He wants it prominently rising where sailors can see it, sailors who will call it Beowulf's barrow as they drive their ships out over the dark sea.

His last request is both a bequest and a dauntless statement of transience. That bold-minded lord ("pristhydig"), as though in an aggressive move, gives his great, gold neck ring to Wiglaf, along with his golden helmet, rings and mail shirt, bidding that he use them well ("het hyne brucan well," l. 2812). His is a powerful legal injunction, used much earlier when he passed on four, splendid gifts from Hrothgar to Hygelac upon his return home from the Grendel adventure (l. 2162). In effect, Beowulf legalistically passes on war band leadership to this young spear-warrior of his. His final words pronounce their kinship, that Wiglaf is the last of their people, the Wægmundings, presumably on his illustrious father's side Ecgþeo (although alliterating names do not directly tie Wiglaf and his father, Weohstan, to Beowulf's father). Fate has swept away all other near and remote kin at their appointed time, those brave earls. And now I, he says, will follow after, as though he will go just as boldly as they did, death being the last adventure.

The burial rites and the mound erected for Beowulf testify beyond his life to his heroic status, bringing together an ancient past—the dragon's treasures, some burned on Beowulf's pyre, others placed into the barrow with Beowulf's ashes—and an honoring present as Geat nobles ride around the barrow fittingly praising their friendly lord. Although the poet notes that treasure in the barrow is now as useless as it once was, the Geats must think otherwise as they thereby honor their great lord. Additionally, they lovingly weave a word song expansively and uniquely in the poem for their king, praising his nobility and valorous works, something of which the poet ethically approves. They end by saying that he was, of the kings of this world, most generous, most harmonious, most kindred-kind to his people, and most eager for fame. Not even Scyld Scefing magnificently sent out to sea with treasures and golden banner received as

signified a send-off. The barrow itself sits prominently on a headland, a beacon for sailors, thus having a purchase on the future as well as memorializing what has passed.⁹ Through their praise, the funeral links Beowulf's people to the deeper heroic past and, as they circle the barrow, memorializes the expansive kingship values for which Beowulf lived and died.

As for the Maldon hero, Paul Cavell compares Byrthnoth's actions to those of Edmund in the *Passio Sancti Edmundi*: both stories highlight the singular nature of the hero and his rejection of common sense. The hero pursues his necessary trajectory.¹⁰ In each secular case of great fatality, retainers help as they can, Wiglaf in Beowulf's case, where a song of loyalty and obligation arises, and the two, Ælfnōth and Wulfmæx, who die flanking the dying Byrthnoth (ll. 181–84).¹¹ Their deaths in part spur the many still left, after the stark alternatives of a passage on those who fled: flee or else stay and avenge one's dear lord, or die trying; that in turn soon modulates into laying one's life down next to his. Wiglaf comes to Beowulf's aid, surviving the dragon's rush, though sacrificing a burnt hand, for which he gains a new status. Before the fight he sings his heroic motive. Unable to hold back, he declares what he and the others promised in the mead hall: to repay Beowulf in his time of need for gifts of gear, helmets and swords, by means of which Beowulf honors them. God knows, he adds, that he personally for that gear would much rather embrace the dragon's fire with dear Beowulf than behave in ways he denounces: that is, bear his shield home without first confronting the foe threatening his lord's life (ll. 2633–55).

In contrast to the retainers Wiglaf castigates, many retainers step forward to avenge Byrthnoth's death or die trying, for which they gain a life-transcending glory—true to their lord during his life and recommitted now in the face of his death. Woven through these plots is an admonitory message and two genre points: what should those do who follow? And what kind of lord is worth following? The answer: one's great, generous lord, who is heroically vigorous when at-

⁹ See Howard Williams, *Death and Memory in Early Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). Williams rightly thinks of the funeral as a “ritual performance embedded within a poetic performance, serving as a mnemonic nexus for a range of associations linking the Anglo-Saxon audience to the heroic past” (201). One can add that the heroic genre itself does that work and more, greatly honoring the very figure treated in its terms, no matter how tentatively the poet approaches the question of Beowulf's soul, whether it actually reaches the embrace of those firm in righteousness (“soðfæstra dom” l. 2820).

¹⁰ Paul Cavell, “Heroic Saint and Sainly Hero: The *Passio Sancti Eadmundi* and *The Battle of Maldon*,” *The Hero Recovered: Essays in Honor of George Clark*, ed. Robin Waugh and James Weldon (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2010), 110–24, especially 117.

¹¹ Line citations are to Donald Scragg, *The Battle of Maldon AD 991* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991).

tacked and whom one should support in whatever way one can. One should win status and renown if possible; otherwise one should become a martyr, or at least an icon, to retainer loyalty. The strength of that imperative in relation to such a lord, even if he is criticized, is such that it even infects prose accounts in the *Saxon Chronicle*. As that is so those accounts merit a brief digression, even though they do not involve fully heroic deaths.

At least two prose entries in the *Saxon Chronicle* become tales in their own right, sporting the crucial message that victory matters, just as long as one does not follow one's lord's killer. We see this in an account of heroic strife between Cynewulf, Cyneheard and their retainers (entered in the *Saxon Chronicle A* for 755—not the actual, historical date); and in the story of Aethelwold's rebellion (*Saxon Chronicle A* entries for 901 and 905, possibly a year off in each case). When the great war leader, King Cynewulf, spies an ambush while visiting a compound where his mistress lives, mention of whom is an implied criticism, he heroically rushes out ("ut rædde") upon his attackers, severely wounding their leader, Cyneheard, before being cut down.¹² The few retainers who accompanied him, and who no doubt vowed support in the mead hall, do no less, despite an offer of settlement from Cyneheard.

They die furiously fighting Cynewulf's attackers, all except for a Welsh hostage. They thus act out their heroic obligation. Cynewulf's men accepted mead from Cynewulf and so they do not accept Cyneheard's offer. They keep to the drink confirmed kinship and reciprocity of the mead hall, heatedly upholding the faithful law of retainer-kinship with their lord. Cyneheard, the attacker, then holds the compound against other men of Cynewulf's, who come in the morning to avenge Cynewulf's death. Again Cyneheard offers terms, noting that the opposed groups have kinsmen in common. They reject his terms while offering safe passage to those who are their kinsmen, who in turn refuse that offer, preferring to stay with Cyneheard. Thus a principle of retainer loyalty triumphs, as well as one of competitive honor.

The men who are with Cyneheard say they will no more abandon their lord than did those men who were slain with Cynewulf. Cyneheard and all who are with him then die in the subsequent attack, except for one, Osric's godson (Osric is one of Cynewulf's loyal, avenging officers, an ealdorman, who comes that morning).

Right loyalty to a king prevails here, as it does in the dispute between King Alfred's successor and Alfred's nephew (entered for 991 and following in the

¹² Citations are from *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel*, eds. John Earle and Charles Plummer, 2 vols. (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1892).

Saxon Chronicle). But there Edweard, Alfred's successor, is not slain and eventually Aethelwold, the rebellious nephew, dies when confronted by the men of Kent. Although some scholars think stories like those of Cynewulf and Cyneheard circulated as heroic, saga-type literature before and during the Alfredian period,¹³ the *Saxon Chronicle* instance and the Aethelwold story are politically inflected prose, although, if turned into poetry, they would resemble an extended moment in *Beowulf*—the Finn episode, during which Danes suffer an ambush in which their lord, Finn's brother-in-law, is killed.

The Danes last through a winter in close quarters, in a truce with their lord's slayer, before taking revenge. They then annihilate Finn's men and his allied Jutes, returning home with Finn's treasure and his queen, their princess. A forty-eight line fragment, in an early eighteenth-century copy exists, probably from a version of this story, *The Fight at Finnsburh*. There we have heroic boasts as Danes discover hostile warriors massed outside their hall. A close siege ensues at the doors of the hall; the fighting lasts for at least five days. The poet says he has never heard of young warriors fighting more worthily in repayment for the mead Hnæf gave them, a sentiment reminiscent of Wiglaf's motives for helping a beleaguered Beowulf against the dragon. Chronologically, heroic poetry in the tenth century now moves in two directions: into the victory verse we call *The Battle of Brunanburh* along with a much shorter poem, *The Five Boroughs Poem*, before giving us the fatal rededication of loyal retainers in *The Battle of Maldon*.

Brunanburh, *Saxon Chronicle A* for 937, celebrates noble lordship and martial settlement. One defends hoard, home and lands against a reign of terror, in this case a Viking-Scot invasion, establishing boundaries in doing so. That settlement, furthermore, intensifies kinship bonds where they already exist between King Æthelstan and prince Edmund, thus partially reconstructing them. Warfare as a clash of weapons is a kind of law expressed in images of blood and God's candle, the sun, a sign of victory. That theme finds reinforcement in the next poetical entry celebrating Edmund's victory in the five boroughs, which explicitly states the motif of freeing men from the bondage of Norse oppression.

While expanding kingly dominion, Edmund, that protector of warriors, frees Danes. Both poems comprise an intense political argument for the primacy of West Saxon kings. Phrases invoke an heroic past, as in *Brunanburh*'s celebration of victorious battle, such that never has there been greater slaughter, so books say, since Angles and Saxons first seized the land, proud war smiths overcoming

13 Sir Frank Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 3rd edition (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 1971), 209.

the Welsh (ll. 72–73). The heroic past is here revived in the present. That is, myth, history, and heroic poetry form part of an extended present that would seize the future, as inflected from the ruling perspectives of a triumphant, West Saxon dynasty.¹⁴ In that respect, *Brunanburh* shares with *Widsith* a reflective, albeit aggressive, concern for an emerging, Anglo-Saxon social order, which asserts status given a formative, legendary past.¹⁵ In genre, however, *Widsith* lacks heroic action, being a catalogue poem praising the generosity of some important kings and queens rather than others. It showcases a poet's conferring of fame or infamy on legendary figures, without which they would have been forgotten.¹⁶

Unlike Homeric heroes, the Anglo-Saxon poetical hero is not partially divine, nor does he or she in some way usurp or else defy the powers of a legitimate, righteous king (think of Achilles opposing Agamemnon). Beowulf serves both Hrothgar and Hygelac, his uncle, as well as his cousin, Heardred. Byrthnoth serves Æthelred, Judith beheads a besotted tyrant, and Walter escapes Guthere's clutches. Cynewulf is a legitimate king in his own right and Hengest and the half-Danes in *Beowulf* disentangle themselves from a terrible truce with Finn. The hero is mortal and recognizes God's power—as decider and as protector, through whose strength granted Judith prevails against Holofernes, to Whom Byrthnoth prays intensely in his last moments for the safe passage of his freed soul, and to Whom, in several boasts that are vows rather than braggadocio, Beowulf defers (though not prior to pursuing Grendel's mother).

When divinity becomes integrated into the hero's tests and triumphs, as with Judith, we have something almost hagiographical, which the Byrthnoth story anticipates. In this connection one should note Byrhtferth's late tenth or early eleventh-century account of how the lord's mercy sustained Byrthnoth because he was worthy and so did not need Aaron and Hur, Exodus 17.12.¹⁷ Yet as Aaron serves Moses, so Byrthnoth serves King Æthelred. Moreover, although not hagiographical, there is a deep plot determinant in Beowulf's case. He is a culture hero whom one can hardly imitate, coming out of an Indo-European matrix Georges Dumézil sketches for us, eventually combining as he does three functions: a ruler function, a warrior/guardian function, and a fertility function

14 I treat this matter extensively in *The Anglo-Saxon Warrior Ethic: Reconstructing Lordship in Early English Literature* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2000).

15 For a detailed argument, see John D. Niles, "Widsith and the Anthropology of the Past," *Philological Quarterly* 78 (1999): 171–213.

16 Kemp Malone, ed., *Widsith* (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1962) gives detailed information about the many personages mentioned in the poem.

17 See Michael Lapidge, "The Life of St. Oswald," ed. Donald Scragg, *The Battle of Maldon* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), 51–58.

(purging hall and mere of pollution, much as Judith slays Holofernes, who was intent on polluting her).¹⁸ Those functions are dramatized in linear order: first the warrior and fertility functions, then the king function when he rules his own people, although, true to the warrior-hero function, he will seek the dragon alone, following the luck he has drawn because he would spare his beloved men that danger.

In this regard, Byrhtnoth does not initially follow the heroic archetype, that is, taking on the battle as his alone from the very beginning—a singular stance reflected in Judith's slaying of Holofernes and in Waldere's fight with Guthere. As the peoples' lord, the sovereignty function, he arrays his army, showing his men how to stand, shield in hand. He urges them not to fear. Then he alights from his horse there where his trusted, household troops are. Byrhtnoth, Æthelred's thane, fights for his king, while his men fight for him. That puts him in a leadership position he handles well as he arranges guards for the ford the Vikings must use, placing his army so Vikings cannot cross. The Vikings, seeing their predicament, cunningly ask for passage. Byrhtnoth relents, in his pride, we are told. Yet he calls out what God alone knows—the outcome beforehand of battle. In that call he heroically makes himself prominent.

When battle begins, Byrhtnoth encourages his men, urging a focus on glory against the Danes. Hardly thinking he will lose, he steps forward, heroically resolute, toward an advancing Viking, each intending evil, much as hate arises when Beowulf calls out the dragon. Here Byrhtnoth is almost singular in his engagement. The Viking wounds him with a spear thrust; but the earl's shield skill saves the moment, breaking the spear. He kills the Viking, and then a second one, which gladdens him. Laughing, he thanks God for the day's work God has given him (much as the Life-Lord gives worldly honor in *Beowulf*). A second phase develops as a flying javelin pierces him, a spear that a comrade plucks out and returns, killing the Viking who threw it. Meanwhile, another Viking attacks, meaning to seize Byrhtnoth's golden armor; beleaguered in this third phase, as Beowulf was against the thrice attacking dragon, although in the third attack aided by Wiglaf (ll. 2669–706), Byrhtnoth fights back, drawing his sword and striking the Viking, only to have yet another Viking cut off the sword arm. While still exhorting his men, he feels infirm and so begins a prayer of thanks for all the worldly joy he has had, a prayer in which he hopes further that the Lord will grant grace to his soul on its journey to Him, so that it may travel in peace, unharried by hell-spirits (ll. 173–80).

18 Georges Dumézil, *Mitra Varuna: An Essay on Two Indo-European Representatives of Sovereignty*, trans. Derek Coltman (1948; New York: Zone Books, 1988).

That prayer's opening further aligns him with Beowulf's last fight and dying moments, during which Beowulf thanks the Lord for the treasure he won for his people. We are later told that Beowulf's soul seeks the judgment of the righteous. But in Byrhtnoth's case a special issue has arisen, a personal need much like Judith's for God's protection. Byrhtnoth says he has the greatest of needs on behalf of his spirit ("mæste þearfe," l. 175), thus invoking that heroic world obligation but now transferred to God. His mood may be anxious, as Fred Robinson has argued¹⁹; it at least reflects an intense desire, a beseeching of the generous, merciful Lord of Angels. After his prayer, heathens kill Byrhtnoth, along with the two warriors who flanked him (ll. 132–84). Although Byrhtnoth's death only merits a laconic entry in the Saxon Chronicle for 991, and his burial at Ely is said to be in a place of honor, the poem in effect is his memorial monument, by which genre he is given an heroic death.

Moreover, that heroic stand has yielded a compelling triptych: Byrhtnoth and two warriors alongside him, forming a stark image the loyal survivors now contemplate, each in a particular way. They must turn retainer loyalty to their lord firmly away from the psychologically understandable desire to save their lives. They then express that loyalty as a recommitment. As a group their speeches and reactions recall vows in the mead hall and social status, while invoking every personal tie and obligation possible in their world, aside from marriage and in-law relations. Those ties even include a political hostage's loyalty to his host. All the ties, then, that bind characters in heroic story, and man to man in society, are then dramatically opposed to the shame of lord-less ingratitude. The poet knits them together to underwrite a new ideal of reciprocal loyalty unto death, a suicidal ideal that goes beyond the initial urge to avenge Byrhtnoth. When Offa, one of the loyal retainers, is said to lie "thanely" near his lord (l. 294), the original tableau of Byrhtnoth flanked by two retainers becomes the ultimate meaning of being athane. Indeed, as Byrhtwald says late, in the most moving of speeches, may he mourn who even thinks to turn from the war play. Rather than leave he, Byrhtwald, thinks only to lie by the side of his beloved lord, thus reenacting the feelings of love if not the mournful actions of those Geats circling Beowulf's barrow. Rededicated loyalty unto death has become the ultimate meaning of warrior devotion and an heroic death, conferred by an altered genre, the ultimate honor.

¹⁹ Fred C. Robinson, "God, Death and Loyalty in *The Battle of Maldon*," J. R. R. Tolkien, *Scholar and Storyteller: Essays in 'Memoriam'*, ed. Mary Salu and Robert T. Farrell (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 1979), 76–98.

That honor, as I argued in the beginning, in effect reflects the late, Anglo-Saxon literary culture of warrior death, imitated in the literature of the North, if not on the ground historically, although the latter is possible. Roberta Frank has surveyed eleventh-century Viking material for expressions of this turn in warrior culture. She begins by citing a memorial eulogy for the Norwegian king, Saint Olaf:

The skald Sighvatr describes how one of Olaf's leading marshals died at the head of his slain king ... Björn made his courage abundantly known ... [falling] in the host with the loyal men of the king's bodyguard at the head of his renowned lord; praised is that death.

Frank further notes that in the *Bjarkamál* both Bjarki and Hjalti behave similarly, resolving to lie at the head and foot of their king.²⁰ One can think of both warriors as having imbibed the new standard into the very marrow of their heroic identities, identities demanding that one can achieve glory now only by fighting and dying next to one's already dead king. We know from Saxo Grammaticus's thirteenth-century paraphrase that Hjalti is in the arms of a whore when his king dies; Bjarki yells for him and the two exchange insults as Hjalti arms himself and joins the ongoing fight.

So far the dynamic differs from *The Battle of Maldon's* demonstration of retainer loyalty. Both then fight without any other support, like the loyal retainers probably cut off given the flight of cowards and others who saw the cowards flee in *Maldon*. Both kill a literal heap of enemies and Bjarki even offers to slay Odin, if he can find him. The corpses piled up, he says, are exchange tokens, so that later people will know how much he valued the gold his king gave him.²¹

A stronger, historically situated account is given poetically by Arnórr Thor-tharson of the Norwegian king, Harold Hardrada's fatal opposition at Stamford Bridge (1065 C.E.) to the English, who are led by Earl Harold, the same Earl who loses to William of Normandy at Hastings (1066 C.E.). Harald rushes into battle recklessly and, despite his courage and skill, dies. His loyal retainers choose "rather to fall around the battle-swift king than accept peace"; Frank adds that fifty years later another band, this time of Danish warriors, behaves similarly, according to the account of an English monk, Aelnoth. Having lost their great prince, they choose to fall with glory rather than surrender.²²

²⁰ Roberta Frank, "The Battle of Maldon and Heroic Literature," ed. Donald Scragg, *The Battle of Maldon AD 991* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), 196–207; here 205.

²¹ For a convenient translation, see G. N. Garmonsway and Jacqueline Simpson, *Beowulf and its Analogues* (London: Dent Dutton, 1968), 163–76.

²² Frank, "The Battle of Maldon and Heroic Literature" (see note 20), 205–06.

Recalling the shift in *Maldon*, from vows to avenge Byrthnoth or die trying to revenge for as long as one can, then dying to lie beside one's dead lord, one can see that this new culture of heroic death effectively removes revenge from calculations of honor and retainer solidarity in this ongoing life, calculations that could include *leaving* the field of battle after one's lord dies (which occurs in *Beowulf*). It reframes revenge as a suicidal value even fierce warriors reenact. That culture most clearly, and perhaps first, has its literary expression in *The Battle of Maldon*, for nothing like it exists in *Beowulf* or in any other Old English compositions, all of which quite likely precede the Scandinavian incarnations. By including this new culture of death, the heroic genre has changed across Northern story, while still monumentalizing the heroes whose actions it dramatizes. We see as much in the contrasting treatments of Harald Hardrada's death.

The Norwegian court poet, Arnórr Thortharson (or Arnar Jarlascad as he is known in Snorre Sturlason's *Heimskringla*), emphasizes Harald's heroic strength and courage, his unwavering heart and his blood-stained sword before describing the moment of death as ill-luck. A "gold-mounted" arrow spared not "the foe of thieves." This generous king's friends then, as indicated above, "All chose to fall / Around their war-wont leader / Rather than ask for peace."²³ In the *Saxon Chronicle C* Harold's fall is hardly heroic, mainly a matter-of-fact. It is the poet's lines and the heroic genre emphasizing courage, strength and generosity that form a literary monument of death for the Norwegian king, that heroic culture of death obviously still admired several centuries after the fact, Snorre having written his account in the thirteenth century.

²³ See Snorre Sturlason, *Heimskringla Or The Lives of The Norse Kings*, ed. Erling Monsen, trans. A. H. Smith (Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons, Ltd., 1932), 567.

Mary Louise Fellows (University of Minnesota)

Death and Ritual: The Role of Wills in Late Anglo-Saxon England

I. Introduction

Anglo-Saxon wills reveal Anglo-Saxons' preoccupation with death and their efforts to take control of death and its meaning. Through the transfer of wealth accompanied by requests for intercessions and other remembrances, Anglo-Saxon testators and their communities link terrestrial memory with eternal celestial life. This chapter's investigation of known extant Anglo-Saxon wills and other historical writings discussing Anglo-Saxon wills demonstrates how the expectation of death, death itself, and the belief in an afterlife marked a community's daily rhythms and collective memory.¹ The first part of the paper relies on a twelfth-century chronicle of the history of the abbey at Ely to relate one testator's efforts, consisting of four distinct will ceremonies, to transfer land at his death to the abbey.² It accompanies the description of the will ceremonies with a consideration of their cultural implications. This discussion confirms that the tradition of wills in Anglo-Saxon England remains obscure because the evidence of it primarily consists of sixty-four vernacular documents, dating from the mid-ninth century through the eleventh century, and a number of Latin references to and

¹ Michael D. C. Drout argues, on the basis of the extant wills and the absence of contradictory evidence, that the custom of will execution began in Kent as early as the seventh century and spread to other parts of England in the tenth century as a result of the Benedictine reform. "Anglo-Saxon Wills and the Inheritance Tradition in the English Benedictine Reform," *Selim* 10 (2000): 5–53; here 8–9, 8, n. 12. The inherent biases in Anglo-Saxon wills' archival preservation warrant, at best, tentative generalizations. After all, most of the extant vernacular wills are known only through post-Norman Conquest copies. Also, a relatively small number of archives from eastern monastic houses held most of those copies. Yet another significant limitation concerning the archival evidence of the wills is that it seems that both pre- and post-Conquest scribes summarized and omitted material not directly pertinent to the interests of their monasteries. Kathryn A. Lowe, "The Nature and Effect of the Anglo-Saxon Vernacular Will," *Legal History* 19 (1998): 23–61; here 23, 32; Dorothy Whitelock, Preface, *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, ed. and trans. Dorothy Whitelock (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1930), xli–xliii; here xli.

² *Liber Eliensis*, ed. Ernest Oscar Blake. Camden Third Series, 92 (London: Royal Historical Society, 1962) (variously ascribed to Richard Fitzneale and Thomas of Ely).

abstracts of vernacular wills.³ What can be said with some confidence, however, bolstered by the chronicle's narrative, is that the charters referred to as Anglo-Saxon wills, unlike modern wills in which the writings themselves transfer property at death, serve only as evidence of death-time transfers.⁴ The second part of the paper elaborates on how wills, the written evidence of wills, and the ceremonies surrounding wills influenced the social fabric of Anglo-Saxon communities. The conclusion underscores the rich detail found in the archival evidence relating to Anglo-Saxon wills and argues that these wills effectively challenge the traditional distinctions between oral and written, sacred and secular, and the living and the dead.

II. Anglo-Saxons' Will-Making Rituals

A. A Chronicle of Siferth's Late Tenth-Century Will

The *Liber Eliensis*, which is a twelfth century history that chronicles the Ely abbey's beginning in 673, provides a compelling narrative of a testator's will making.⁵ Section 11 of Book 2, which had to do with the abbey's rights to land at Downham, describes the efforts, consisting of four separate ceremonies with varying degrees of formality, of a man named Siferth to give land to the abbey at his death. With each detail of each ceremony, the self-serving nature of the narrative to make Ely's claim to the land at Downham indisputably emerges. Even if the *Liber Eliensis* may contain exaggerations about Siferth's multiple efforts to make a testament, the level of details regarding the authenticity of his transfer of the Downham land to Ely reinforces this chapter's thesis about the role of wills in Anglo-Saxon culture. The first of Siferth's four will-making rituals occurred at the abbey. Siferth, who is reported in the *Liber Eliensis* as suffering from the debilitations frequently brought on by old age in addition to gout, went with his wife to Ely.⁶ The *Liber Eliensis*, in its report that Æthelred and his moth-

³ Even this number must be viewed as an approximation. For a description of the debate about whether a charter qualifies as a will, see Lowe, "The Nature and Effect" (see note 1), 24–25. For a complete list of the extant wills, see Lowe, "The Nature and Effect" (see note 1), 48–64. This list provides archival information and also where to find editions and translations.

⁴ Harold Dexter Hazeltine, General Preface, *Anglo-Saxon Wills* (see note 1), vii–xl; here viii.

⁵ *Liber Eliensis* (see note 2).

⁶ The narrative indicates that Siferth met with Bishop Æthelwold as part of this visit. *Liber Eliensis* (see note 2), 86. The Bishop was a major figure in tenth-century royal politics and the Benedictine reform movement. Barbara Yorke, Introduction, *Bishop Æthelwold: His Career and Influ-*

er, Ælfthryth, were among those whom Siferth had asked to gather and serve as witnesses to his oral statement, discusses Edgar's death and describes Æthelred as the future king.⁷ Those references to royalty help date this visit as sometime after King Edgar's death (975), but before Edgar's son Æthelred took the throne (978). With his audience in place, Siferth announced his intention to give two hides (a measurement of land) at Downham "to God and St Æthelthryth [the founding abbess of the abbey] for the sake of his soul" ("Deo sancteque Æðeldriðe pro anima") and that he had chosen the abbey at Ely as the place for his burial ("ibique se dixit sortitum esse locum sepulture sue").⁸

The *Liber Eliensis* then recounts Siferth's second will-making ceremony that occurred when Siferth, even as his own infirmity weighed him down ("ipse nimia infirmitate depressus"), returned once more to Ely.⁹ The chronicle includes in its description of this visit that, upon arriving at Ely, Siferth went to the gravesite of his friend Goding.¹⁰ There, amongst the abbot and three other men, Siferth stated the following:

"volo ut conventio mea coram vobis renovetur, videlicet quomodo hic elegi mihi locum sepulture mee et post diem meum Deo et sancte Æðeldriðe dedi duas hydas, quas in Dunham habeo, et filie mee duas hydas do in Wilbertune et precor, o amici mei, ut hoc oblivioni non tradatis, immo, ubi necesse fuerit, illud recognoscatis"

"[I desire that my agreement be renewed before you, namely how I have chosen the place of my burial here, and have given to God and St Æthelthryth, after my day is over, the two hides which I have at Downham, and how I give to my daughter two hides at Wil-

ence, ed. Barbara Yorke (Woodbridge, UK, and Wolfeboro, NH: Boydell, 1988), 1–12; here 9–11 (outlining Æthelwold's growing influence and extended relationships with King Edgar and his then queen Ælfthryth). For a discussion of Siferth's gifts to Ely as part of a set of social and political dynamics marked by monastic patronage, connections to the royal house, and strengthening of kinship ties, see Andrew Wareham, *Lords and Communities in Early Medieval East Anglia* (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell, 2005), 33–43.

7 *Liber Eliensis* (see note 2), 86.

8 *Liber Eliensis* (see note 2), 86; *Liber Eliensis: A History of the Isle of Ely from the Seventh Century to the Twelfth*, trans. Janet Fairweather (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell, 2005) [hereafter cited as *Liber Eliensis* [Fairweather translation]], 110.

9 *Liber Eliensis* (see note 2), 86.

10 *Liber Eliensis* (see note 2), 86. The friend was Goding of Gretton and, according to Andrew Wareham, kin to Siferth by marriage. *Lords and Communities* (see note 6), 36. The chronicle includes a description of Goding as a monk who had made a death-time gift of land at Toft to Ely. *Liber Eliensis* (see note 2), 100. Goding, as a member of the family of the king's reeve Wulfstan of Dalham, seems to have been an important figure in the region. For further discussion of Goding, see Wareham, *Lords and Communities* (see note 6), 30, 36, 40.

burton.¹¹ And I beg, my friends, that you do not cast this into oblivion, but rather, when it becomes necessary, acknowledge it.”¹²

When Siferth returned home yet a third ceremony took place. According to the chronicle, “on his return home that day, he renewed this agreement in the presence of the better people of his region beyond Upware, in the place which is called *Hyravicstowe*” (“Item eodem die remando domum renovavit eandem conventionem coram me lioribus eiusdem provincie ultra Upuere in loco, qui dicitur Hyravicstouue”).¹³ The use of the noun “oblivio,” along with Siferth’s reiteration of his will as soon as he had returned home from the abbey that day, adds a poignancy to the will-making rituals as it reveals Siferth’s total dependence on the memory of others once he has died.

The fourth and last of Siferth’s will-making ceremonies took place at his deathbed. He had sent for Ely’s abbot, Byrhtnoth, as well as some of the brothers of the abbey. The chronicle includes a list of a dozen men, including a man named Byrthelm, who gathered along with Siferth’s wife and daughter at Siferth’s bedside.¹⁴ Abbot Byrhtnoth arranged for a scribe to write down Siferth’s will in triplicate on one piece of parchment, conventionally referred to as a tripartite chirography, in the presence of all these witnesses. After it was read before everyone, the abbot had the parchment cut so as to create three copies of the written document, starkly demonstrating how Anglo-Saxons used written wills as evidence of an oral transfer. Siferth and the abbot each kept one copy. The third copy of Siferth’s will played a critical evidentiary role when, according to the chronicle, it was sent by messenger to Ealdorman Æthelwine, a nobleman who presided over the environs of East Anglia, which included Ely.¹⁵

11 See Wareham, *Lords and Communities* (see note 6), 39 (suggesting that Siferth’s daughter received only a life estate in the land with the remainder going to Ely).

12 *Liber Eliensis* (see note 2), 86–87; *Liber Eliensis* [Fairweather translation] (see note 8), 110.

13 *Liber Eliensis* (see note 2), 87; *Liber Eliensis* [Fairweather translation] (see note 8), 110.

14 The chronicle includes a report that, after Siferth’s death, his wife, on becoming a nun, sold land at Stretham to Ely. *Liber Eliensis* (see note 2), 84. Wareham connects this transfer of property to Ely with that of the transfer made to Ely by her husband. He suggests that Siferth’s connection to Ely benefited his family “materially and spiritually,” because “[l]inks with the abbey not only underpinned Siferth’s daughter’s rights to inherit land, but also ensured that his widow could retire as a holy and religious woman.” *Lords and Communities* (see note 6), 39–40.

15 For a discussion of Æthelwine’s noble family and political influence and his particular role at Ely, see Cyril R. Hart, *The Danelaw* (London and Rio Grande, OH: Hambledon, 1992), 569–98. For a further description of Æthelwine’s authority, see Wareham, *Lords and Communities* (see note 6), 13–28.

Anglo-Saxon written wills might consist of two or three copies executed at the same time. As documented in the *Liber Eliensis*, if the will was short enough and the parchment large enough, a scribe would write the substance of the will three times on a single sheet, separating each version from the other with the term *chirographum* (meaning one's own handwriting or autograph) written in capital letters.¹⁶ The scribe then would cut the parchment with a knife through the word *chirographum*, creating three copies with half the word chirography left on each copy. Through comparison with each other, donors and beneficiaries could prevent and detect forgeries. The donor would retain one copy, the principal beneficiary another, and the third would go either to another major beneficiary or to a disinterested monastery.¹⁷ In Siferth's case, as the excerpt below recounts, the third copy went to Æthelwine:

tertiam vero misit statim per prefatum Brihtelmum Æieluino alderman, qui tunc temporis deiebat in Ely, et petiit ab eo, ut suum testamentum ita stare concessisset quomodo abbas illud scipserat et ordinaverat apud Lindune coram predictorum testimonio virorum. Cum itaque Aieluinus alderman hoc audisset et cyrographum vidisset, remisit illico ad eum Wlnothum de Stouue cum Brihtelmo sciscitatusque est ab eo quid aut quomodo vellet de testamento suo. Qui mox per eosdem renuntiavit ei sic suum testamentum absque omni contradictione vel mutatione se velle stare, sicuti prefatus abbas illud in cyrographo posuerat. Quod ut Aieluinus alderman audivit, totum concessit ut staret, sicuti ipse Siferthus testatus erat.

[The third part he sent at once by the aforesaid Byrthelm to Ealdorman Æthelwine, who at that time was dwelling at Ely, and asked him to allow his will to stand, just as the abbot had written it and set it down at Linden in the witness of the aforementioned men. And so, when Ealdorman Æthelwine had heard this and saw the chirograph, he sent Wulfnoth of Stowe back there to him with Byrthelm and asked him what it was he wanted concerning his will and with what conditions. Siferth soon sent the reply to Æthelwine through Wulfnoth and Byrthelm, that he wanted his will to stand, free from challenge or alteration, just as the aforesaid abbot had set it down in the chirograph. When Ealdorman Æthelwine heard this, he granted that it should stand in its entirety, in accordance with the attestation that Siferth himself gave.]¹⁸

¹⁶ See, e.g., *Anglo-Saxon Wills* (see note 1), 133 (will of Ælfhelm), 163 (will of Wulfgeat), 167 (will of Ætheling Æthelstan).

¹⁷ For further discussion of the chirographic form of wills, see Hazeltine, General Preface (see note 4), xxiii; Kathryn A. Lowe, "Lay Literacy in Anglo-Saxon England and the Development of the Chirograph," *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts and Their Heritage*, ed. Phillip Pulsiano and Elaine M. Trehearne (Aldershot, UK, Hants, UK, et al: Ashgate, 1998), 161–204; here 168–79; *Anglo-Saxon Wills* (see note 1), 150–51.

¹⁸ *Liber Eliensis* (see note 2) 87; *Liber Eliensis* [Fairweather translation] (see note 8), 110–11.

This narrative reveals a good deal about the nature and effect of wills under Anglo-Saxon law at the same time that it raises many unanswerable questions. For starters, one wonders what happened to Siferth's other property, land or chattels, after his death and who would have had a claim to the Downham property in the absence of Siferth's sroven will. Scholars suppose that, in the absence of a will, a decedent's property would be divided among kinfolk, but they acknowledge the insubstantial evidence they rely upon when discussing Anglo-Saxon inheritance customs.¹⁹ Regardless of these and other uncertainties surrounding the chronicle's narrative, it provides insight into the persistent prominence of death in the lives of an elite segment of Anglo-Saxon society. The ritualistic events included congregations of laity, ecclesiastics, royalty, aristocrats, and others of less obvious rank to witness the serial publication of Siferth's will. They also included the production of written evidence of a will, which was then read aloud to those gathered at the testator's bedside. The final events of a request for official approval from a member of the aristocracy and the receipt from him of assurances of the will's enforcement serve to underscore further the serious nature of wills and the ceremonies surrounding them.

B. Cultural Implications of Siferth's Will Ceremonies

Siferth's first oral statement constituted his promise to give land at Downham at his death. The ritualistic publication of the testator's intent seems all important in the narrative found in the *Liber Eliensis*, which emphasizes the presence of witnesses to Siferth's oral promise. Siferth's reference to his place of burial indicates how closely he connected the transfer of land to his death.²⁰ That reference also reveals how much attention Anglo-Saxons—at least those with property and monastic connections—appear to have paid to the final resting place of their re-

19 See Stephen O. Glosecki, "Beowulf and the Wills: Traces of Totemism," *Philological Quarterly* 78 (1999): 15–47; here 27–31; Frederick Pollock and Frederic William Maitland, *The History of English Law before the Time of Edward I*, 2 vols., 2nd edition. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1898–1899), vol. 2, 322–23.

20 The intimation of an exchange of the Downham land for the right to be buried at Ely suggests that this Anglo-Saxon will contained some attributes of a modern contract. Not all Anglo-Saxon wills or all parts of these wills, however, appear at all to be contractual in nature. Michael M. Sheehan, *The Will in Medieval England: From the Conversion of the Anglo-Saxons to the End of the Thirteenth Century*. Studies and Texts. 6 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1963), 40.

mains.²¹ When Siferth later repeated his intent to give land at Downham to Ely in front of yet three other sets of witnesses, he strengthened the proof of his will and intensified the cultural significance of his will making.²² Siferth's participation in four will ceremonies and careful documentation of all four of them in the *Liber Eliensis* may have to do with anxieties on the part of Siferth or the abbey or both about potential challenges by Siferth's kinsfolk or others to the ownership of the Downham property after Siferth's death.²³ Whatever the reason for the republications of Siferth's will and however common the practice of multiple republications may have been, in this instance, they served to weave together across geographical landscapes sacred and secular communities of diverse social standing so as to establish a collective memory of Siferth and his death-time transfer of property. That Siferth's elaborate will making extended over time and gained the attention of a number of persons with only a tangential connection to him establishes how much the upper levels of late Anglo-Saxon society dwelled on the expectation of death and death itself.²⁴

Of the four ceremonies, the purpose and effect of Siferth's final iteration of his will on his deathbed remain the most obscure. Siferth might have felt a need to ask the abbot of Ely and others to gather at his deathbed because he continued to harbor doubts about the efficacy or accurate recollection of his earlier oral statements. Alternatively, the administration of last rites might account for why Siferth had sent for the abbot and others. The description found in the chronicle of the fourth will ceremony contributes to the uncertainty of why yet again Siferth republished his will. Unlike in earlier parts of the narrative, the *Liber Eliensis* does not include either Siferth's direct or indirect statements. Instead, it por-

21 For another example of a burial provision, see *The Will of Æthelgifu: A Tenth-Century Anglo-Saxon Manuscript*, ed. and trans. Dorothy Whitelock (Oxford: Printed for presentation to the members of Roxburghe Club, 1968), 7 (bequeathing twenty oxen and ten cows from one of her many estates to St. Albans in return for Æthelgifu's burial).

22 The additional disposition of land to his daughter raises a distinction made frequently by legal historians between what they call a *post obit* gift—gifts that occur after death—and a multiple-gift will or *cwide*. Sheehan, *The Will* (see note 20), 39.

23 Alan Kennedy, as he addresses various types of gifts made to Ely, takes up the question of whether Ely obtained legal rights to the Downham property at the time of the first will ceremony. "Law and Litigation in the *Libellus Æthelwoldi Episcopi*," *Anglo-Saxon England* 24 (1996): 131–83; here 164–65.

24 On a related matter, this narrative says nothing about whether Siferth had the power to change his mind and revoke his will after his first oral declaration. The issue of revocability remains unclear under Anglo-Saxon law. Lowe, "The Nature and Effect" (see note 1), 36–37. It might be that those oral declarations that were contractual in nature became irrevocable, but that testators retained the right to revoke or modify other types of declarations. Sheehan, *The Will* (see note 20), 46.

trays Abbot Byrhtnoth as the instigator of the writing and the person who oversaw its oral reading. The decision to memorialize the will in writing, in fact, might say more about the abbot's attentiveness to proof than Siferth's. The gathering itself, regardless of its primary purpose, reveals the attentiveness of a segment of the community to the imminent death of one of its distinguished members and the inseparability of the sacred and secular rituals attending death.

The presentation of the written record of Siferth's will to Ealdorman Æthelwine provides considerable insight into the role wills played within a prominent and privileged segment of Anglo-Saxon society. Æthelwine apparently exercised local power over the affairs of the abbey. It is in this capacity that Siferth appropriately would have requested from him permission to make a will.²⁵ Other written wills contain similar requests for leave to make a will, but more typically testators made their requests to their king.²⁶ In addition, many of the tenth- and eleventh-century wills include a payment, called a *heriot*, typically of chattels to the king.²⁷ Sometimes, as is the case in the will of Æthelgifu, testators also made payments to the queen or an *ætheling*—a term that refers to someone who would be eligible to succeed to the throne or alternatively refers to any and all sons of the king.²⁸ Dorothy Whitelock speculates that the custom of payment to the king grew out of a Teutonic custom under which a loyal follower would return upon his death the weapons he had earlier received from his lord.²⁹

Over time, wills of ecclesiastics and women, as well as men, began to include this type of bequest. The heriots varied in size based on the testator's rank and served, at least in part, as the basis for testators' requesting the

²⁵ Kennedy, "Law and Litigation" (see note 23), 144.

²⁶ See, e.g., *Anglo-Saxon Wills* (see note 1), 20 (will of Ælfgifu), 22 (will of Ealdorman Ælfheah), 30 (will of Æthelwold).

²⁷ *Anglo-Saxon Wills* (see note 1), 100.

²⁸ *The Will of Æthelgifu* (see note 21), 7 (giving 30 mancuses of gold, two stallions, and deerhounds to the king and 30 mancuses of gold to the queen). Ealdorman Ælfheah's will contains a very large heriot. He gave land, gold, a dish, a drinking cup, a short sword, a decorated scabbard, six swords, six horses with equine accessories, and six spears and shields to King Edgar. He also gave Queen Ælfthryth land, her eldest son (Edmund) 30 mancuses of gold and a sword, and her youngest son (Æthelred) an estate of land. *Anglo-Saxon Wills* (see note 1), 22. As Dorothy Whitelock points out with respect to the gifts to the king, "[i]t is uncertain how much of this huge bequest we should regard as payment of heriot" since "Ælfheah was the king's kinsman and would no doubt make bequests to him on this account." *Anglo-Saxon Wills* (see note 1), 123.

²⁹ *Anglo-Saxon Wills* (see note 1), 100.

king's support for, and protection of, the dispositions found in their wills.³⁰ The request for permission from Æthelwine and the heriot in general represent testamentary rituals that would have enhanced the social significance of death-time gifts of property and death itself.

More than mere permission, however, seems to have been at stake when Æthelwine agreed to let Siferth's will stand. As Æthelwine exercised his power to authorize a will, he also performed some of the functions that courts and executors serve today. Æthelwine assured himself that Siferth freely intended to give the land to Ely, so as to eliminate or, at a minimum, reduce the possibility that fraud, forgery, undue influence, or incapacity played a role in the making of the will. In the twenty-first century, the merger of property and death in a public forum occurs in a court with jurisdiction over probate matters. Within those proceedings, the court similarly assures itself that a will reflects the freely given intent of the decedent.³¹ Æthelwine's further commitment to protect Siferth's intended grant effectively has him serving also as the precursor to today's executor, who takes on the fiduciary responsibility to give effect to a will.³² The narra-

30 For further discussion of the heriot, see Sheehan, *The Will* (see note 20), 81–82; *Anglo-Saxon Wills* (see note 1), 100. Pauline Stafford suggests the heriot and the will itself can be seen as “a dialogue between nobles and royal power.” Stafford, *Unification and Conquest: A Political and Social History of England in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries* (London and New York: Arnold, 1989), 60.

31 *Restatement of Law (Third) of Property: Wills and Other Donative Transfers* (St. Paul, MN: American Law Institute, 2003), § 8.3.

32 For further discussion of executor- or trustee-type roles in the enforcement of Anglo-Saxon wills, see Pollock and Maitland, *The History of English Law* (see note 19), 321–22; Andrew Rabin, “Old English *Forespeca* and the Role of the Advocate in Anglo-Saxon Law,” *Medieval Studies* 69 (2007): 223–54; Sheehan, *The Will* (see note 20), 41–44. For examples of other wills that entrust the will's effectiveness to a trusted person, see *Select English Historical Documents of the Ninth and Tenth Centuries*, ed. Florence Elizabeth Harmer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914), 4 (will of Reeve Abba, naming the head of Christ Church as advocate [forespreoca] and patron [mundbora] for Abba and his heirs), 33 (will of Ealdorman Æthelwold, referring to dispositions that Æthelwold had directed his friends to make [“swa swa ic nu þam þæt freondum sæde”]); *Anglo-Saxon Wills* (see note 1), 40 (will of Ælflæd, conditioning a gift to the ealdorman Æthelmær on his willingness to protect Ælflæd during her life, advocate on her behalf after her death, and secure her will and the will of ancestors as a true friend and advocate [“fulla freod ⁊ forespreca”]), 50 (will of Wulfric, directing that the archbishop and the testator's brother be protectors and friends and advocates [“mund ⁊ freond ⁊ forespreocan”] for the monastery the testator had established), 52 (will of Archbishop Ælfric, after assuring the payment of Archbishop Ælfric's debts and heriot, asking Bishop Wulfstan and Abbot Leofric to do what they think is best if other matters should arise), 74 (will of Ælfric Mocercope, asking his brother to make a payment of silver to Ramsey and asking Bishop Ælfric, Tofi the Proud, and Thrym to act as protectors of his will [“quides mundes”]).

tive in the *Liber Eliensis*, underscored in particular by Æthelwine's reported concerns and commitments, reflects and reinforces the central purpose of the many rituals embodied in Siferth's will making. Taken together they substantiate and corroborate Siferth's testamentary intent. Æthelwine may have been "rather slow on the uptake" as Simon Keynes noted, but that does not detract from the seriousness with which he took the question of Siferth's testamentary intent and decision to make a will.³³ The public request for permission to make a will, combined with Æthelwine's diligence, provides stark evidence of how Anglo-Saxon wills furthered individual testamentary freedom at the same time that they strengthened community bonds.

Yet another facet of the narrative involving Siferth's will making concerns the distinction between an oral and a written will. No one disputes the general notion that the written wills that have survived from the Anglo-Saxon period served as evidence of an oral declaration.³⁴ Nevertheless, the written document itself could operate, in certain contexts, as a publication of the will to witnesses. The line between an oral and written will, in fact, gets blurred in the narrative of Siferth's will making when the chronicle includes a description of one of the abbot's aides reading the written will aloud to the witnesses. When the *Liber Eliensis* then goes on to describe Brythelm taking the written copy to Æthelwine, the difference between oral and written wills again grows ever more indistinguishable. The written will served as the means by which Siferth published his will to Æthelwine and made him a witness to it.

The will of Ætheling Æthelstan (the son of King Æthelred) similarly suggests that the written record also can serve as an oral declaration. The written will references itself as being read aloud. "[N]u bidde ic ealle þa witan þe mine cwyde gehyron rædan ægðer ge gehadode ge læwede þæt hi beon on fultume þæt min Cywde standan mote" ("Now I pray all the councilors, both ecclesiastical and lay, who may hear my will read, that they will help to secure that my will may stand").³⁵ It seems that, according to the will, Æthelstan had received permission from his father to write a will on the Friday after the feast of Midsummer, which in the year 1014 was June 25th.³⁶ Both Christ Church at Canterbury and the Old

33 Simon Keynes, "Royal Government and the Written Word in Late Anglo-Saxon England," *The Uses of Literacy in Early Mediaeval Europe*, ed. Rosamond McKitterick (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 226–57; here 255.

34 Hazeltine, General Preface (see note 4), viii; Sheehan, *The Will* (see note 20), 47–54.

35 *Anglo-Saxon Wills* (see note 1), 62, 63 (translation).

36 *Anglo-Saxon Wills* (see note 1), 60 ("Nu þancige Ic minon fæder mid ealre eadmodnesse on godes ælmihtiges naman þære answare þe he me sende on frigedæg æfter middessumeres mæsedæge be Ælfgare Ælffan suna. þæt wæs þæt he me Cydde mines fæder worde þæt ic moste be

Minster at Winchester record Æthelstan's death on June 25th, but do not specify the year.³⁷ As Keynes surmises, it would seem that Æthelstan made his will on the day that he received permission to do so, and then died later that same day.³⁸ Presumably knowing that he would be unable to declare his will orally to those witnesses appropriate for one of his standing because of his grave illness, Æthelstan directed that his written will be read aloud to his councilors.³⁹ The oral declaration essentially morphs into a written will read aloud as a matter of practice and practicalities.⁴⁰

Although a written will may serve the function of an oral will, written Anglo-Saxon wills, with their formulaic conventions, implicate testamentary intent in a distinct way.⁴¹ In fact, those conventions of Anglo-Saxon written wills, which arguably function similarly to the rituals surrounding oral wills, may explain why Æthelwine wanted to assure himself that Siferth fully embraced the document purportedly representing Siferth's disposition of property at his death. An Anglo-Saxon written will typically begins with an identification of the testator and the purpose of the document (*notificatio*), then includes details of the provisions (*donatio* or *dispositio*), and closes frequently with a curse directed at those who might not follow the directions of the will (*sanctio*).⁴² A curse implicitly seeks, at the same time it asserts, God's approval of the testator and the tes-

godes leafe 7 be his geunnan minre are 7 minra æhta swá me mæst ræd þuhte ægðer ge for gode ge for worulde"), 63 ("Now I thank my father in all humility, in the name of Almighty God, for the answer which he sent me on the Friday after the feast of Midsummer by Ælfgar, Æffa's son; which, as he told me in my father's words, was that I might, by God's leave and his, grant my estates and my possessions as seemed to me most advisable in fulfillment of my duties to God and men").

37 *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Michael Lapidge (Chichester: Wiley, 2014), s.v. Æthelstan Ætheling.

38 Keynes, "Royal Government" (see note 33), 254.

39 Keynes, "Royal Government" (see note 33), 254.

40 For a discussion of other written wills serving the publication function, see Keynes, "Royal Government" (see note 33), 253–54. Brenda Danet and Bryna Bogoch view the self-conscious references to the act of writing in the wills as evidence of the transitional nature of these documents as written evidence of oral acts. "From Oral Ceremony to Written Document: The Transitional Language of Anglo-Saxon Wills," *Language and Communication* 12 (1992): 95–122; here 108–09 [reprinted with a different title, "Orality, Literacy, and Performativity in Anglo-Saxon Wills," *Language and the Law*, ed. John Gibbons (London and New York: Longman, 1994), 100–35].

41 Hazeltine, General Preface (see note 4), xxx (discussing the formulaic nature of most of the written Anglo-Saxon wills).

42 Sheehan, *The Will* (see note 20), 56 (agreeing that the written wills in the late tenth century adopted a formulaic framework, but also emphasizing their informal quality).

tator's wishes. Brenda Danet and Byrna Bogoch, who look to Anglo-Saxon wills to help understand "the transition to the use of writing for legal purposes," view curses as part of ritual practices reflecting the fusion of religion and magic.⁴³

The transformation by a scribe of an oral will into a standardized and ritualistic structure has the potential to promote, but also the potential to constrain, a testator's dispositive wishes.⁴⁴ In fact, the introduction of a scribe, as well as the active participation of community members in a testator's will making, challenges the meaning of individual testamentary intent. Harold Dexter Hazeltine, as part of the general understanding that Anglo-Saxon written wills served as evidence of oral contracts, relates the structure found in the wills to the "several stages in the oral and formal act of making the will," which is to say a meeting of the minds of the parties between the promisor and promisee.⁴⁵ Michael D. C. Drout further speculates that the standardization in the wills increased the influence of monastic beneficiaries.⁴⁶ Alger N. Doane, in the context of scribes copying Anglo-Saxon poetry, provides some insight about the complexity of scribal transcription. He promotes the view of the "scribe as performer," by which he means that "the old text largely predetermines the new but is authoritatively overridden by the words of the new oral/written text."⁴⁷ Doane's work prompts consideration of the possibility that a scribe's familiarity with the vernacular, which "the scribe could speak and write from words heard in both the outer and inner voices," would encourage him to vary the will "in ways that made harmonic sense with the understanding of the text by its writer and contemporary

⁴³ Danet and Bogoch, "From Oral" (see note 40), 114. Even though curses have an oral origin, Danet and Bogoch believe that Anglo-Saxons involved with will making used them to strengthen the efficacy of the documents or in their words "to transfer performativity" to the documents. "From Oral" (see note 40), 115. Whether or not a residue of an oral ritual, the power of a curse to deter interference in a written will may increase because of the very fact that it calls upon well-established rituals and formulas. *Ælfgar's will* provides an example of a curse directed at those who would undo or otherwise interfere with the testator's dispositive wishes. *Anglo-Saxon Wills* (see note 1), 8 ("gif it wo awende: habbe him wið god gemæne and wið þe holi scas þe ic it to becueþen habbe þat he it nefre ne bete buten on helle wite se þis quide awende boten it me seluen wende er min ende"), 9 ("if anyone alters it, may he have to account for it with God and the holy saints to whom I have bequeathed my property, so that he who shall alter this will may never repent it except in the torment of hell, unless I myself alter it before my death").

⁴⁴ Danet and Bogoch, "From Oral" (see note 40), 106; Hazeltine, General Preface (see note 4), xxx.

⁴⁵ Hazeltine, General Preface (see note 4), xxx.

⁴⁶ Drout, "Anglo-Saxon Wills" (see note 1), 12, n. 18.

⁴⁷ Alger N. Doane, "The Ethnography of Scribal Writing and Anglo-Saxon Poetry: Scribe as Performer," *Oral Tradition* 9 (1994): 420–39; here 431, 432.

users.”⁴⁸ Siferth’s collaboration with ecclesiastical and lay community members marks all four of Siferth’s will ceremonies. The introduction of a scribe at his deathbed further accentuates the ambiguity of attributing a will and testamentary intent exclusively to the person named as the testator.

The communal nature of Anglo-Saxon wills, oral and written, makes manifest how the ceremonies surrounding a testator’s will making established and re-established collective memory. Siferth’s will making strikingly demonstrates how closely matters of family, religion, property, death, and immortality intertwined when testators decided to memorialize death-time transfers of property. The discussion below considers further the effect of wills on testators’ reputations and relationships with family members, other members of their households, religious institutions, and their communities at large during their lives and after their deaths.

III. The Influence of Anglo-Saxon Wills on the Social Fabric of Late Anglo-Saxon Communities

The public aspects of a declaration of a will, as the narrative demonstrates, joined together different communities and diverse sectors of Anglo-Saxon society. Siferth’s preparations for death linked the monastic community of Ely to his home place (Hyravicstowe), where he died (Linden), and the regions where the lands he bequeathed were located (Downham and Wilburton). Siferth’s, or perhaps more accurately Abbot Byrhtnoth’s, recourse to a written record of the will also suggests how the writing itself brought differently configured communities together. Physical documents allow for broader publication and have the potential to extend far into the future the recollection of testators, their wills, and the ceremonies surrounding their wills. The extant Anglo-Saxon written wills provide evidence that at least propertied laypersons appreciated the benefits of a written document, even though they themselves might have had to go to a local church to have the documents read to them. What Kathryn A. Lowe calls a

⁴⁸ Doane, “The Ethnography of Scribal Writing” (see note 47), 432, 433. For further discussion of the role of the scribe, see Alger N. Doane, “Oral Texts, Intertexts, and Intratexts: Editing Old English,” *Influence and Intertextuality in Literary History*, ed. Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 75–113.

“literate mentality,” in which “people come to appreciate, respect, accept and finally want the benefits of this new technology [the written word] for themselves,” allowed people to make connections beyond the confines of their immediate environs as well as to future generations.⁴⁹

The publication of wills, whether by oral declaration or the reading of a written will aloud, had other cultural consequences. The will situated testators within their families and communities based on the specifics of their wills. Indeed, testators’ references to property and persons without careful identification suggest the intimate relationship the will had to families and neighborhoods.⁵⁰ Whom they named as beneficiaries, what those beneficiaries received, and how they described, conditioned, or otherwise spoke about the gifts they were making in their wills seemingly would have influenced community perceptions of the testators and their beneficiaries. At the same time, the wills could have affected testators’ relationships with their beneficiaries. The narrative of Siferth gives a hint of this dynamic. Siferth apparently wanted to gain respect as he emulated his friend Goding by providing for his own burial at Ely. Also, Andrew Wareham suggests that Siferth’s gifts to Ely helped to ensure that “his widow could retire as a holy and religious woman, being able to visit the graveyard where her deceased husband was buried amongst kin and friends.”⁵¹ The oral reading of the will of the ætheling Æthelstan providing for his foster mother “because of her great deserts” (“for hire myclon geeearnungon”), meaning diligence, related to all the community Æthelstan’s gratitude and marked his foster mother’s kindnesses.⁵² The gracefulness of his remarks would seem to have allowed both testator and beneficiary to gain stature among the group of ecclesiastics and lay people who heard it read aloud or read it at the time of his death or even many years later.

The complexity and ambiguity of the noblewoman Wynflæd’s will, dated about 950, provides yet another example of how death-time gifts of property defined families and situated a testator and will beneficiaries within those fami-

⁴⁹ Lowe, “Lay Literacy” (see note 17), 179. For further discussion of lay literacy in late Anglo-Saxon England, see Susan Kelly, “Anglo-Saxon Lay Society and the Written Word,” *The Uses of Literacy* (see note 33), 36–62; Keynes, “Royal Government” (see note 33), 244–56.

⁵⁰ Danet and Bogoch, “From Oral” (see note 40), 119–23 (viewing this feature of Anglo-Saxon wills as evidence of their transitional nature in which a written document remained dependent on community knowledge and understandings).

⁵¹ Wareham, *Lords and Communities* (see note 6), 39–40 (relying on *Liber Eliensis* (see note 2), 84, which describes the gift of land that Siferth’s widow made on the day she entered the convent).

⁵² *Anglo-Saxon Wills* (see note 1), 60, 61 (translation).

lies.⁵³ Wareham in his study of kinship, property, and monastic programs examines the distribution patterns in Wynflæd's will and detects matrilineal and patrilineal patterns to the will's division of property.⁵⁴ The property that Wynflæd specifically identified as coming to her from her own mother passed to her daughter.⁵⁵ The property that she specifically identified as her marriage gift went to her son for his life, then to her daughter for her lifetime, if she were to survive him. At her daughter's death, Wynflæd then directed that it pass to her son's son (her grandson).⁵⁶

Wareham reasons, on the basis of geographical location and other documentary evidence, that the other estates passing to Wynflæd's daughter were acquired previously by Wynflæd from her mother or from the crown and that the rest of the estates passing to her son and grandson were acquired by Wynflæd from her husband.⁵⁷ Notwithstanding the omission in her will of any limitations on her right to dispose of the property as she wished, the dispositions in her will may have followed the directions given to her by her family and her husband. Even so, her emphasis on both matrilineal and patrilineal kinship in her will would seem to establish Wynflæd's central role in both families at the time she had the will published and written and at and after her death as she directs her property in a manner that reinforces kinship ties. In addition to using her will to maintain and strengthen familial ties, she also exploited the custom of will making to tie herself and her family to religious foundations during her life and after her death.⁵⁸

Another cultural aspect of Wynflæd's will is its effect on enslaved persons who worked on her estates. Wynflæd both bequeathed and manumitted men, women, and children.⁵⁹ Wynflæd would have understood that the manumissions

53 *Anglo-Saxon Wills* (see note 1), 10–15. For the dating of the will, see *Anglo-Saxon Wills* (see note 1), 109. For a discussion of the identity of Wynflæd and a range of views about her possible connection to royalty, see Simon Keynes, "King Alfred the Great and Shaftesbury Abbey," *Studies in the Early History of Shaftesbury Abbey*, ed. Laurence Keen (Dorchester: Dorset County Council, 1999), 17–72; here 43–45; *Anglo-Saxon Wills* (see note 1), 106.

54 Andrew Wareham, "The Transformation of Kinship and the Family in Late Anglo-Saxon England," *Early Medieval Europe* 10 (2001): 375–99; here 381–83.

55 *Anglo-Saxon Wills* (see note 1), 14.

56 *Anglo-Saxon Wills* (see note 1), 10.

57 Wareham, "The Transformation of Kinship" (see note 54), 381–83. For further discussion of kinship solidarity established through patrilineal and matrilineal lines of inheritance, see Glo-secki, "Beowulf and the Wills" (see note 19).

58 *Anglo-Saxon Wills* (see note 1), 12.

59 For an analysis of the bequests and manumissions of enslaved persons in Wynflæd's will, including consideration of the status of different groups of workers mentioned in her will,

would reflect well on her as a Christian at the time that she made her will and after her death.⁶⁰ Based on archival evidence, the effect of the publication of the will on the enslaved persons of her household, both those whom she bequeathed and those she manumitted, remains difficult to assess.⁶¹ Publication would not necessarily have meant that enslaved persons would know any details about whether, or under what conditions, they might gain their freedom at the death of their owners.

Nevertheless, even if Anglo-Saxon testators did not intend them to know their plans and did not include them among the group of persons gathered at the time of publication that would not inevitably mean that enslaved persons would not learn about the details of their owners' wills. It is certainly possible that slave owners may have used a promise of manumission at death to gain the good will, loyalty, and compliance of their enslaved workers. Slave owners as well may have used the promise or hope of manumission as a way of engendering competition, jealousy, and hostility among their enslaved workers in order to inhibit alliances among them and to reinforce their compliance to their owners' demands. In any event, given the frequency that bequests of enslaved persons or their manumissions occurred in Anglo-Saxon wills, enslaved persons would have been well aware of the importance of the wills of their owners to their own future well-being. The documentation of bequests of enslaved persons and manumissions leads to the unavoidable conclusion that wills performed a vital function within the system of slavery in late Anglo-Saxon England.

Anglo-Saxon wills also influenced the social fabric of late Anglo-Saxon England because of the rituals demanded by testators in the wills themselves. Testators frequently requested religious foundations to sing masses, psalms, and prayers on behalf of themselves and named family members.⁶² A number of the bequests made in exchange for religious intercessions show the potential for wills to provide for a presence of testators and their families in their commun-

see David A. E. Pelteret, *Slavery in Early Mediaeval England: From the Reign of Alfred until the Twelfth Century* (Woodbridge, England, and Rochester, NY: Boydell, 1995), 126–28.

⁶⁰ Pelteret, *Slavery* (see note 59), 150, 247.

⁶¹ For a discussion of the different ways a person could acquire slave status, the distinction between a laborer who was owned from one who was legally bound to the land, and the various Old English terms used to refer to enslaved persons, see Pelteret, *Slavery* (see note 59), 41–45.

⁶² Scholars have debated the theological understandings and instrumental use of prayers for the dead during the early middle ages. See, e.g., Jacque Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Aldershot: Scolar, 1990); Megan McLaughlin, *Consorting with Saints: Prayer for the Dead in Early Medieval France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994).

ities long after a testator's death.⁶³ As priests, monks, nuns, and other officiates prayed for each individual's soul by name, they generated and nourished social relations through the creation of memory for the community itself.⁶⁴

Megan McLaughlin captures this communitarian idea in her study of prayers for the dead in medieval France when she writes that "the best way to recognize someone's continuing presence in the liturgical community was to record his or her name in its register, and use that name in its prayers."⁶⁵ The intercessions tied a testator to a monastery and to the other benefactors of that monastery in the same way that a monastery's archives, which included wills or references to wills, preserved the memory of a testator and a testator's family.⁶⁶

One final characteristic of Anglo-Saxon wills further binds religious and lay communities together while perpetuating the memory of a testator across many generations. A number of the extant wills include bequests of successive interests in land, meaning the creation of a life estate in land in one beneficiary, followed perhaps by the creation of another life estate in another beneficiary after the death of the first life tenant. Whether the testators created one or more than one life estate, they also named another beneficiary or beneficiaries to take possession of the land in perpetuity after all the life estates had ended.⁶⁷ Frequently, but not always, the wills name a religious institution as the ultimate owner of the land after the deaths of the testator and surviving kindred and, in addition, direct the life tenant to make donations to various religious institutions. Through possible omissions of detail in the written documents or through customary un-

⁶³ See, e.g., *Anglo-Saxon Wills* (see note 1), 20 (will of Ælfgifu, asking Bishop Æthelwold to intercede for Ælfgifu's mother and herself), 66 (will of anchorite Mantat, reminding certain deserving priests and deacons that they have promised to sing two hundred masses and two hundred psalters and many holy prayers for Mantat, King Cnut, and Queen Emma), 88 (will of Edwin, requiring a beneficiary to pay rent from the estate each year to St. Edmund's in return for one mass to be said each day for Edwin's soul and the soul of his brother).

⁶⁴ Drout connects the requests for intercessions for the souls of the testator and the testator's ancestors to the Benedictine reform and argues that the monasteries "position[ed] themselves as a significant link between the present and the past and thus, in the minds of testators, between the present testator and his or her future descendants." Drout, "Anglo-Saxon Wills" (see note 1), 26–29, 29.

⁶⁵ McLaughlin, *Consorting with Saints* (see note 62), 101.

⁶⁶ Patrick J. Geary makes a similar point with reference to continental cartularies. *Phantoms of Remembrance: Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millennium* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 86.

⁶⁷ For an example of this type of will, see the discussion of Wynflæd's will *supra* at notes 53–58. Other examples of successive interests, include *Anglo-Saxon Wills* (see note 1), 6 (will of Ælfgar), 16 (will of Bishop Ælfsige).

derstanding, it seems that the life tenants, in fact, could provide for other family members and delay possession to the religious institutions.⁶⁸

Few Anglo-Saxon scholars have considered the implications of will provisions creating successive interests. Hazeltine takes for granted the testator's use of successive interests in land and concentrates on the practices in place to assure the delivery of title or possession after the testator's death and the death of subsequent life tenants.⁶⁹ Susan Kelly considers the oldest extant will, one written for a Kentish reeve Abba between 832 and 840, which contained elaborate provisions creating these types of successive interests.⁷⁰ She too does not question the reasons why Abba would have used successive interests in land, but uses Abba's will as part of her discussion of the development of vernacular writings. She concludes that the will's complexity explains why Abba would have "recognized the value of recording this information."⁷¹

Michael M. Sheehan's discussion of alms hints that Anglo-Saxons' use of successive interests may have emerged out of death-time rituals. He first situates alms within the Germanic belief in an afterlife, which led to the Germanic people's burying arms, jewelry, clothing, and the like with the body of the dead.⁷² Sheehan, however, warns against a simplistic analysis that treats grave endowments as precursors to the Christians' giving of alms during life for the saving of their souls and ultimately to their making testaments.⁷³ Nevertheless, the burial practices that prevailed into the seventh century suggest why converts to Christianity might have found teachings about a spiritual life after death and about

68 These types of discrepancies about ownership can be detected among the related wills of a father Ælfgar, and his two daughters, Æthelflæd and Ælfflæd. For example, Æthelflæd appeared to ignore her father's direction in his will that an estate of land should pass to a religious foundation after her death. Instead, she directed in her will that it should pass to her sister and her sister's husband. For editions and translations of these wills, see *Anglo-Saxon Wills* (see note 1), 6–9 (will of Ælfgar), 34–37 (will of Æthelflæd), 38–43 (will of Ælfflæd). For a discussion of these three wills and others where discrepancies can be identified, see Lowe, "The Nature and Effect" (see note 1), 41–47. Lowe concludes from these three wills and others that family members "enjoyed some latitude with donations of estates granted in reversion after one or more lives to the Church inasmuch as such bequests could be suspended for further lives before the property passed irrevocably out of family hands." Lowe, "The Nature and Effect" (see note 1), 44.

69 Hazeltine, General Preface (see note 4), xxxvi–viii.

70 For an edition and translation of the will, see *Diplomatarium Anglicum Ævi Saxonici: A Collection of English Charters* from the reign of King Æthelberht of Kent, A.D. DC. V. to that of William the Conqueror, ed. and trans. Benjamin Thorpe (London: Macmillan, 1865), 469–74.

71 Kelly, "Anglo-Saxon Lay Society" (see note 49), 48.

72 Sheehan, *The Will* (see note 20), 6–7.

73 Sheehan, *The Will* (see note 20), 7–8.

using property to secure salvation appealing. When the Christian missionaries arrived in England in the sixth century, they came from the Roman Empire with a notion that the faithful should use a portion of their wealth for alms during life and at death. The converts' familiarity with grave endowments made it easier for them to understand that they might direct a portion of their property away from their families on behalf of their own souls.⁷⁴

Within the development of the *post obit* gift of alms—a gift of alms that occurs after death—may lie Anglo-Saxons' enthusiasm and familiarity with successive interests in land. Christian writings show that alms had a penitential function and that the church fathers meant for penitents to give alms during their lives.⁷⁵ As Sheehan reports, “[i]f made on a large scale, it [alms] demanded a considerable sacrifice of the donor ... Hence many preferred to give the property during life, but retain its use until death.”⁷⁶ Religion, therefore, appears to have provided the motive for the *post obit* gift. The pattern established by the *post obit* gift lent itself to replication. If a Christian donor could give alms while retaining a life estate in land, that same donor could easily imagine giving a life estate to a surviving family member before giving ultimate possession of the property to an ecclesiastical institution. The inherent nature of the lifetime transactions represented in the written wills in which testators retained possession of their land until they died would seem to have established the method by which testators could continue to use their land long after their deaths for the benefit of their kindred and their preferred religious institutions.⁷⁷ These types of arrangements worked to the benefit of both the testator and the religious institution. The religious institutions named would have an economic incentive to oversee the effectiveness of the will. As Kelly notes in her discussion of Abba's will, Abba primarily wanted to assure that the land stayed in the hands of his kindred so long as he had kindred surviving and that explains Abba's naming of Christ Church as ultimate beneficiary of the property and recipient of annual payments.⁷⁸ With the church's continuing involvement, it could protect Abba's testamentary wishes well into the future.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ Sheehan, *The Will* (see note 20), 8.

⁷⁵ Sheehan, *The Will* (see note 20), 15–16, 68.

⁷⁶ Sheehan, *The Will* (see note 20), 16.

⁷⁷ For a further discussion about the alienation of land by will, see Sheehan, *The Will* (see note 20), 83–99.

⁷⁸ Kelly, “Anglo-Saxon Lay Society” (see note 49), 47–48.

⁷⁹ Abba made a request in his will for Christ Church to act as advocate and protector of him and his heirs. *Diplomatarium* (see note 70), 472.

Sheehan's presentation of the history of alms and the *post obit* gift provides as good an explanation as any of how Anglo-Saxons, especially ecclesiastics and wealthy laity, gained familiarity with successive interests in land and why testators found them useful for meeting their familial and religious obligations. A review of the extant wills would suggest testators commonly relied on this technique, but that conclusion must remain tentative because the wills that contained successive interests are the very ones that the religious institutions would have retained as documentary evidence of their rights in land. What seems undeniable is that the presence of successive interests in the extant wills firmly joins testamentary intent, land, community, Christian beliefs, ritualistic traditions, and memory.

IV. Conclusion

This paper situates Anglo-Saxon wills within Anglo-Saxon England's familial, religious, and class structures. It also shows the fluidity of traditional distinctions, such as oral and scribal, individual and collective intent, sacred and secular, and spiritual and political. The narrative of Siferth's will making, in particular, details how will ceremonies—involving memorable gatherings—affected family relationships, a community's perception of itself, and the integration of communities otherwise separated geographically or by religious or class status. That narrative also highlights the interplay of rituals and property as testators made efforts to assure their continuing terrestrial memory while seeking an eternal celestial home. The insight into the lives of late Anglo-Saxons that this paper provides goes beyond investigation of how Anglo-Saxons made wills and their concerted efforts to assure a clear and controlled transfer of wealth at death. It provides abundant evidence that wills and rituals surrounding those wills signal an elite segment of Anglo-Saxon society's preoccupation with death and also the profound longings of ecclesiastics and laity to control the consequences of death.

Rosemarie Danziger (Tel Aviv University)

Palimpsest in the Service of the Cult of the Saints—The False Arch in the Nave’s Vault of the Abbey Church of Saint-Savin-sur-Gartempe

Introduction

The odd placement of the *faux doubleau*—an added-on false arch decorated with busts of saints—painted across the barrel vault of the Saint-Savin nave,¹ ca. one-third down the vault’s length (viewed from west to east), has caused some researchers to query about this location and its function (Fig. 1). Previous studies, especially those by Yvonne Labande-Mailfert and Jérôme Baschet, who studied the iconography and ornamentation of the church, have given different explanations for its placement in this particular architectural location and its possible liturgical function.² However, in the iconographic context—the spread and division of the biblical scenes from Genesis and Exodus—this placement remains a mystery. It is especially enigmatic considering that the Saint-Savin edifice—clearly an engineering bravura—presents a rare case of a continuous barrel vault (32 m long), uninterrupted by the supporting arches typical for contemporary churches in the region of Poitou. Hence, the question remains: why was the visual fluency of the vault truncated by a “foreign element,” visually disrupting the architectural continuity and cutting through the iconographic program?

My conjecture is that the *faux doubleau* was added across the vault in order to conceal a faulty allocation of register in the western part of the northern vault. This faulty space allocation was, in my estimation, due to the painter’s disregard of the height discrepancy between the western and northern parts of the vault (Fig. 2 and 2a). The correction of the flaw then caused a horizontal misalignment mostly conspicuous in the upper register’s inscription band (Fig. 3) It appears

1 The Abbey Church Saint-Savin-sur-Gartempe was consecrated in ca. 1151.

2 Jérôme Baschet, “Ornementation et structures narrative dans les peintures de la nef de Saint-Savin,” *Le rôle de l’ornement dans la peinture murale du Moyen Âge, Poitiers*,” *Cahier de Civilisation Médiévale* 4 (1997): 165–76; Yvonne Labande-Mailfert, “Nouvelles données sur l’abbatiale de Saint-Savin: Fresques–architecture,” *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale* XIV (1971): 39–68; Yvonne Labande-Mailfert, “Le cycle de l’Ancien Testament à Saint-Savin,” *Revue d’histoire de la spiritualité* 50 (1974): 369–96.

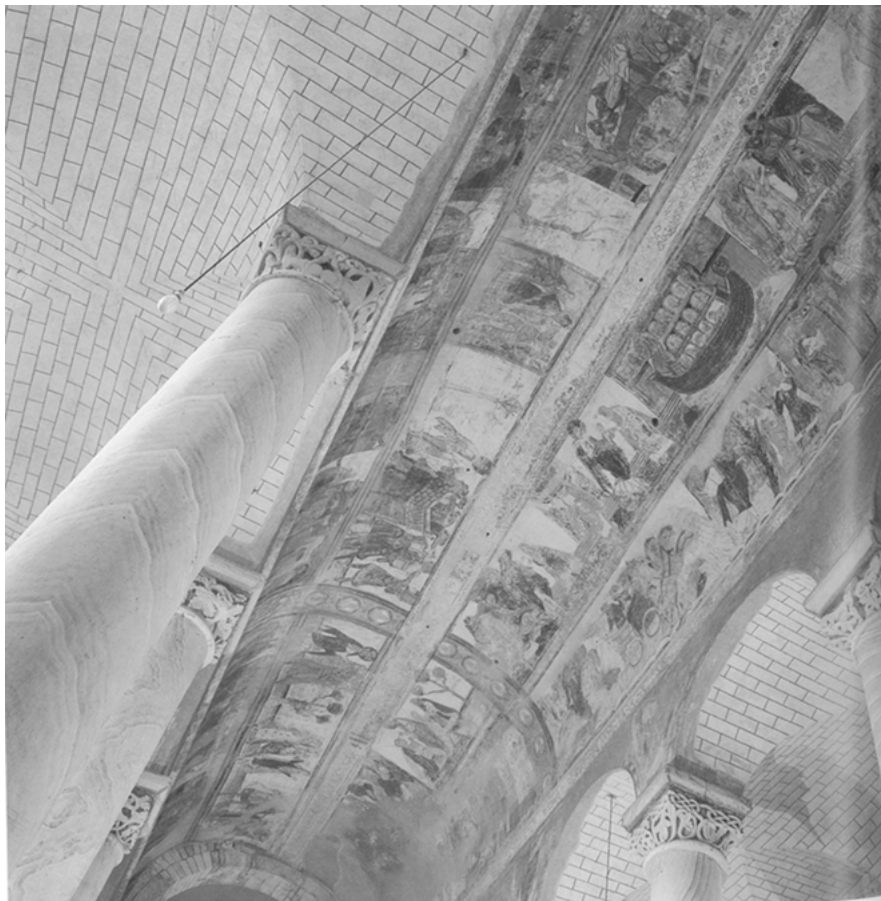


Fig 1: The Long nave vault (Photothèque CESC)

that the only way to correct this flaw would have been the addition of a vertical bar—the palimpsest of a “false arch.” This issue will be thoroughly explained in this paper. Moreover, I shall also show how this addition was utilized to stress the Eucharist-transubstantiation value of the cult of the saints and how it is integrated into the overarching theme of the decorative program of the church.³

3 The Eucharist-transubstantiation concept is in the root of martyrdom as the ultimate *Imitatio Christi*, or the martyrs as “*alter Christus*.” This can be elucidated from the case of St. Ignatius of Antioch, one of the early martyrs who became an exemplary martyr. In his *Epistle to the Romans* he does not only express his yearnings for martyrdom but also illuminates the theology of martyrdom: “I am God’s wheat and I am ground by the teeth of the wild beasts that I may be found



Fig. 2: The three western bay-vaults, seen from the tribune (clearly lower and flatter than the long vault) (Photothèque CESC)

If the painted arch is indeed a palimpsest, and was added in order to conceal a mistake in the painting process, then the choice of its ornamentation—medallions with busts of saints—indicates a most interesting approach. It provides us with insight into the intentional undertaking which is often called for when the need to conceal an error arises. However, at the same time, the particular

pure bread [of Christ].” (*Rom.* 4) “I desire the bread of God, which is the flesh of Christ who was of the seed of David; and for a drought I desire his blood, which is love incorruptible” (*Rom.* 7). See, Rosemarie Danziger, “The Epic Hagiography as Scriptural Genre and its Pictorial Rendering in the Saint-Savin-sur-Gartempe Crypt Frescos: The Metempsychosis of Martyrdom,” *Mental Health, Spirituality, and Religion in the Middle-Ages and Early Modern Age*, ed. Albrecht Classen. *Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, 15 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2014), 206–41; here 230.



Fig. 2a: The three western bay-vaults and the long nave vault. The height discrepancy between the western bays and the long nave vault can be discerned (Photothèque CESC)

choice of depicting saints rather than other ornaments, resulting from an unexpected need, may further enlighten us regarding the thought process in the course of painting. It seems that the creative reasoning here goes beyond the wish to present this palimpsest as a bearer of a lofty idea but also to include it within the overarching theme of the decorative program at Saint-Savin, proclaiming the church as a shrine for the martyrs. The decision to decorate the painted arch with busts of saints manifests the fundamental human preoccupa-



Fig. 3: The northern half of the painted arch; the inscription band is misaligned. (Photothèque CESC)

tion with death and afterlife. This human propensity is reflected in the Christian doctrine of the martyrs as witnesses of Christ's resurrection and as the bearers of

Redemption toward the End of Days—two important roles which are expressed in the iconography of Saint-Savin.⁴

In order to support my hypothesis I will first examine two basic aspects which may help to explain the incidence of the painted arch. First, does the painted arch fill any aesthetic purpose within the architectural context? Second, does it have any thematic role within the biblical iconographic context? To treat the first aspect, I will scrutinize the placement of the painted arch as a “pseudo-constructive” element and compare its ornamental appearance with the arch-in-tradoses ornamentation elsewhere in the building. In passing, I will also touch briefly upon the practices and progression of the fresco work and inlay of the inscriptions.⁵ To consider the second aspect, I will base my study on the sequential iconographic and iconological readings of Yvonne Labande-Mailfert, Robert Favreau, and the recent studies of Marcello Angheben and Carolina Sarrade at the CESC.⁶ Drawing from their insights, I intend to demonstrate how the painted arch remains indifferent to the biblical sequence.

4 The term ‘martyr’ signifies a witness who testifies to first-hand knowledge. The first use of this term in Christian literature refers to the Apostles, who witnessed Christ’s life, death, and resurrection. The first martyr, St. Stephen, was a witness who early in the history of Christianity sealed his testimony with his blood. From St. Stephen on the martyrs throughout the centuries have been invested with the ability to testify and even re-live Christ’s life, death, and especially the resurrection. The martyrs are given an important eschatological role as we read in Rev. 20:4: “And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years” M. Hassett. “Martyr,” *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910), retrieved April 16, 2015 from New Advent: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09736b.htm>

5 For this study I will consult the stratigraphic research of Carolina Sarrade and the archeological research done by Paulette Hugon and Dominique Martos: Carolina Sarrade, “Comprendre la technique des peintures romane par le relevé stratigraphique,” *In Situ* 22 (2013): 2–11; Paulette Hugon and Dominique Martos, “Étude scientifique des peintures murales de Saint-Savin-sur-Gartempe,” *In Situ* 22 (2013): 2–8. Regarding the inscription mise-en-place I consulted with the epigrapher Vincent Debais at CESC—Centre d’Etudes Supérieures de Civilisation Médiévale, University of Poitiers.

6 Labande-Mailfert, “Nouvelles données” (see note 2), 39–68; Labande-Mailfert, “Le cycle de l’Ancien Testament” (see note 2), 369–96; Robert Favreau, *Saint Savin, l’Abbaye et ses peintures murales* (Poitiers: C.P.P.C., Connaissance et promotion du patrimoine de Poitou-Charentes, 1999); Robert Favreau, “Inscriptions de l’église de Saint-Savin-sur-Gartempe,” *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* XIX (1976): 9–37. Marcello Angheben, “L’apport des relevés stratigraphiques à Saint-Savin-sur-Gartempe. L’exemple du Sacrifice de Noé” *In Situ, Revue des patrimoines* 22 (2013): 2–15; Carolina Sarrade, “Comprendre la technique des peintures” (see note 5), 2–11.

Before offering my interpretation of the painted arch, I will introduce various suggestions made by other scholars. Finally, I will show how the ornamentation on the painted arch joins the decorative-program of the Abbey Church of Saint-Savin, in highlighting the church as the site of a memorial *martyrium*—a shrine of the martyrs.

The Decorative System of Saint-Savin and the Painted Arch

The ornamental bands throughout the entire edifice of Saint-Savin are consistent in size, in their general style, and color scheme, and thus contribute to the unity of the entire decorative program. Ornamentation in itself illustrates, with its precise repetitive pattern, the importance of accuracy and physical beauty and therefore it was considered during the Middle Ages as the bearer of truth. The accuracy of the physical traits of an image, whether “three-dimensional” or linear, was seen as rendering things intelligible while exemplifying in general all things visual.⁷ The ornamentation in the architectural context works to transform the space in a dialectical manner: it both delineates the architectural configurations, but also hides the architecture that supports the décor (Fig. 4). Moreover, the ornamentation, in its function as a frame for the image and the inscription, extracts itself from the architecture. In this way the décor erases the wall as a functional structure.

A prominent expression of the ornament as a separator from the architectural support is that of the median ornamental-bands in the apexes of the vaults of the church nave (intersecting the painted arch) and that of the Ss. Savin and Cyprien crypt’s nave (Fig. 5).⁸ Both consist of an à la Greca motif typically effecting a

7 Daniel Russo, “Des lettres sur l’image dans l’art du Moyen Âge. Pour une nouvelle articulation du textuel et du visuel”, in *Qu’est-ce que nommer? L’image légendée entre monde monastique et pensée scolastique*, ed. Christian Heck. Répertoire iconographique de la littérature du Moyen Âge, 1 (Turnhout, Brepols, 2010), 127–44; here 135; Jean-Claude Bonne, “De l’ornement à l’ornementalité. La Mosaïque absidiale de San Clemente de Rome,” *Le rôle de l’ornement dans la peinture murale du Moyen Âge, Actes du Colloque international tenue à Saint-Lizier, Juin, 1995*, Université de Poitiers, CSEM (1997), 103–19. See also, Madeline H. Caviness, “Images of Divine Order and the Third Mode of Seeing,” *Gesta* 22.2 (1983): 99–120.

8 The porch also features a median, but it is shorter, as it is situated between two short barrel vaults.



Fig. 4: Ornamentation in the apsidal triumphal arch, Ss. Savin and Cyprien Crypt (Photothèque CESCO)

sort of “trompe l’œil” (Fig. 6).⁹ The three-dimensional illusionistic appearance of these median bands detaches them from the flat architectural support, pulling along with them the rest of the décor: image and inscription.



Fig. 5: The median band, separating between the northern and the southern vault- registers, Ss. Savin and Cyprien Crypt (Photothèque CESC)

Syntactically, the ornamentation bands function as thematic punctuators; as connective joints; thematic frames; and direction indicators—“rhetorical *ductus*.”¹⁰ The axial delineation of the ornamental bands, such as the median bands and the inscription strips, provide more than just a sense of orientation

⁹ À la Greca, or a la maniera greca, is a term used from the Renaissance on to describe the Greek or Byzantine mode of painting, characterized by vivid realism and “three dimensionality” especially of folds and drapes, evoking tactile perception.

¹⁰ Mary Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought, Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400–1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), Chapter 4: “Cognitive images, meditation, and ornament.” Carruthers argues that the image and the ornamentation signal a *ductus*—the flow of movement. On the topography and liturgy, see Dominique Iogna-Prat, *La Maison Dieu: Une histoire monumentale de l’Église au Moyen Âge (v. 800–v. 1200)* ([Paris]: Éditions du Seuil, 2006), 301–08.

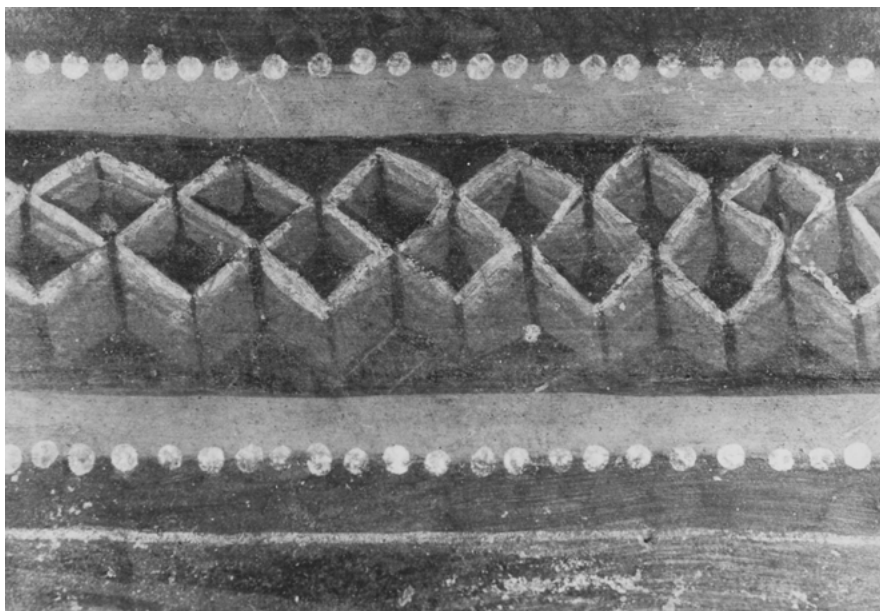


Fig. 6: The median band, detail, Ss. Savin and Cyprien Crypt (Photothèque CESC)

in the architectural space: it confers stability to the images and provides a yardstick by which to size the figures.¹¹ Similar to other contemporary (and earlier) opuses, in all of the Saint-Savin narrative murals the use of parallel horizontal lines in ochre and yellow in the lower part of the picture perseveres. These parallel lines designate the ground upon which the protagonists walk and act.¹² They also create “perspective” for the inner synoptic spaces in which the actions take place, determining the position of the protagonists in relation to the foreground and background.¹³ The strong penchant of the Saint-Savin décor to re-

¹¹ Meyer Schapiro, “On Some Problems in Semiotics of Visual Art: Field and Vehicle in Image-Signs,” *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art* 6.1 (1972–1973): 9–10. The horizontal delineation is especially meaningful in the case of the curved shape of a long vault, which otherwise gives the feeling of an “open firmament” hanging over head.

¹² This horizontal device is persistently continuous from scene to scene. The extent of this persistence is especially interesting in the Noah anecdote: the ground-lines in the scene showing Noah being instructed by the Lord intrude into the ark and flood scene, only the right end of this scene features the flood water, with the drowning sinners and fish.

¹³ Alois Riegl, *Historical Grammar of the Visual Arts*, trans. Jacqueline E. Jung (1966, New York: Zone Books, 2004), 187. First edition (posthumous): *Historische Grammatik der bildenden Künste*, ed. Karl M. Swoboda and Otto Pächt (Graz and Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 1966).

main longitudinal—horizontal can be seen as a unique trait, precisely as is the uniqueness of the exceptionally long barrel vault, which is totally compatible with this module.¹⁴ It should be noted that the vertical divisions between the scenes are relatively subtle. This is expressed mainly by the change of background color, by vertical thin lines and, in a couple of cases, by an arboreal division.

The problematic of the painted arch within the greater context of the décor arises from three basic points: 1. the painted arch stands singularly and bluntly perpendicular to and against the all-embracing persistent longitudinal system, described above; 2. the term “faux doubleau”—false supporting arch—has been extensively used by scholars studying the painted arch. However, it appears to be an incorrect nomenclature. In fact, the painted arch is not located at bearing point as it does not span the lateral columns of the nave’s longitudinal arcades. Thus, it could not create the illusion of a constructive element nor could it possibly function as an architectural accent (Fig. 7); 3. the three-dimensional quality of the median band in the apex of the nave’s vault clashes with the somewhat flat painted arch, with its iconic busts of saints on a background of small flat lozenges.¹⁵ It should be noted, however, that the median band has been significantly altered, as it was painted over sloppily in the course of at least five campaigns of structural repairs between the eleventh and the sixteenth centuries.¹⁶ However, there are still vestiges of its three-dimensional à la greca beehive pattern, similar to that of the median band in the crypt’s vault.¹⁷ Additionally, when the median band was painted over, the painters covered the center of the painted arch, concealing a large portion of the central figure, an oriented

14 If we compare the continuous horizontal proclivity of the nave’s decorative program to the scheme of narrative frescoes at St. Georg in Reichenau-Oberzell, contemporary with those of Saint-Savin and stylistically compatible with them, we can see that in the latter each scene is separated by a prominent frame of à la greca trompe l’œil motif (see note 9). On the comparison between the Saint-Savin frescoes to those in Reichenau, see, Itsuji Yoshikawa, *Peintures de l’église de Saint-Savin-sur-Gartempe*, 2 vols. (Tokyo: Shinchosha Company, 1982), with a French summary of the Japanese text, vol. 1, 25–92.

15 On the iconic image, see Rosemarie Danziger, “The Decorative Program of the Crypt of the Abbey Church Saint-Savin-sur-Gartempe, Theology and Liturgy in the Epic Hagiographic Genre and its Pictorial Rendering,” Master’s Thesis, Tel Aviv University, 2013, 74–82.

16 Catherine de Maupeou and Marie-France de Christen, “Saint-Savin-sur-Gartempe. Restauration des peintures murales de la voûte de la nef,” *Les monuments historiques de la France*, 3 (1976): 33–55; here.

17 Marc Thibout, “A propos de la bande faîtière qui décore la nef de l’église de Saint-Savin,” *Bulletin Monumental* CVIII (1945): 201–11.

bust of Christ in a somewhat larger medallion than those flanking it (Fig. 8).¹⁸ In other instances of perpendicular intersection of ornamentation bands in the Saint-Savin edifice, both bands are “full-bodied.” The best example of such an intersection is found in the Ss. Savin and Cyprien crypt. Here the median band, with “beehive” in à la greca pattern, intersects the sanctuary triumphal arch-extrados and intrados, decorated with full-bodied pattern of ‘S’-shapes, palmettes, and layered discs with radiating spokes.

The study of the entire ornamentation system at Saint-Savin points to the uniqueness of the painted arch within the decorative program. The possibility of studying the other ornamented supporting arches in the nave of Saint-Savin is, however, extremely limited, as there are very few vestiges left in the southern part of the easternmost of the three western supporting arches (some further remnants can be seen in the western extrados of the same arch and in the extrados of the middle one). There are also very little ornamental remnants left on the transept arch and some non-original light ornamentation in the extrados of the triumphal arch (a modern Christ-head is depicted in the center of the extrados facing the nave). The original style of the arch-ornamentation at Saint-Savin can be examined in the narthex, the tribune, and mainly in the crypt, where arches have suffered less in restoration.¹⁹ As described above, the median bands are characterized by their “three-dimensionality,” as can be seen in the crypt’s beehive pattern, in a small portion in the nave, and in the narthex, where it features a “deep” checkered pattern. The ornamentation of the arches is characterized by interlaced scroll-like patterns, palmettes, and floral and geometrical designs. All the other ornamentation and inscription bands are bor-

18 Vestiges of a cruciform halo can still be discerned. A similar oriented bust of Christ with a cruciform halo appears in the center of the triumphal arch intrados, flanked by medallions with busts of saints, is found at the baptistery of St. Jean in Poitiers, contemporary with Saint-Savin. Also, at St. Vitale in Ravenna, the triumphal arch-intrados mosaic from the sixth century is features busts of saints framed in medallions with an oriented “Lamb” of God at the center. Labande-Mailfert found other similar arches with a central medallion featuring a cruciform-haloed Christ or Christomorphic-God at the San Zeno Chapel in Santa Prassede in Rome. Labande-Mailfert, “Le cycle de l’Ancien Testament” (see note 2), 384. However, there the medallions with the busts of haloed saints flanking Christ, or the Christomorphic-God, are not located in an intrados of an arch, but in a window embrasure. Other examples brought by Labande-Mailfert are the Archiepiscopal Chapel in Ravenna from the sixth century and at St. Georg in Oberzell, Reichenau, Germany, where the fresco of the triumphal arch, from the eleventh century, features a central cruciform-haloed Christ flanked by icons of saints.

19 Favreau, *Saint Savin* (see note 6), 161. Comparing the arch-ornaments to the median bands in the repainted nave’s vault attests to their stylistic authenticity as well as their unity and harmony.



Fig. 7: The painted arch's location: Misaligned with a possible bearing point (Photothèque CESC)



Fig 8: The intersection between the painted arch and the median band. The central medallion is covered by the median band. Stratigraphic research shows the central medallion as featuring an oriented Christ with a cruciform halo. (Photothèque CESCMI)

dered with yellow and ochre lines. All of them, apart from the inscription bands, are adorned with a line of white dots (pearls) on the ochre line. A similar border delimits the painted arch with an additional green line that echoes the green and brown lozenges in the background of the saints-medallions. This border is the only part of the arch which hints at an attempt to harmonize it with the other ornamentation bands.

The Genesis and Exodus Scenes and the Painted Arch

To understand fully the *raison d'être* of the painted arch and how it may or may not effectively integrate within the decorative program of the Saint-Savin nave, we need to examine whether it plays a syntactic role amid the scenes from Genesis and Exodus; i.e., whether it can be seen as a connector or a separator between the scenes or between different ideological systems. For this purpose, we first need to examine the sequence of scenes and their architectural geography. The layout of the biblical cycle reveals the method of *mise-en-place*. At the same time, it is apparent that certain elements were necessitated by the physical constraints of the space, which can ultimately explain the existence of the painted arch.

The biblical sequence runs in four registers along the 42 meter long nave. This yields altogether 168 meters of iconographic program (equivalent to the length of the Bayeux tapestry).²⁰ The cycle starts on the northern side of the nave's vault at its western end—the “Galilee”—with the Creation story and the Edenic Era. The Creation cycle is the only one within the larger scheme which is separated from the rest of the program as it is contained within the three western bay-vaults and consequently it follows a unique progression. The reading order of this “mini cycle” is from the top register, west to east-left to right; two or three scenes in each one of the three bay-vaults, continuing across the bay arches. Scenes 1–2 in the first bay are completely effaced. Scenes 3–4 in the second bay feature the creation of vegetation on the third day and the creation of the sun and moon on the fourth day. Scenes 5–6 in the third bay are illegible. The cycle continues in the lower register across the three bay-vaults; again, the reading direction is from left to right. The scenes in the first bay (7–8) feature the planting of the Garden of Eden and the creation of Adam. The three scenes in

²⁰ Labande-Mailfert, “Le cycle de l’Ancien Testament” (see note 2), 372. The sequence used here is based on Labande-Mailfert’s reading of the cycle.

the second bay (9–10–11) feature the creation of Eve; the presentation of Eve to Adam; and the temptation of Eve by the Serpent. The third bay features three scenes (12–13–14), the Original Sin; the Lord reproaching Adam, Eve and the Serpent; and the Expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden.

Now the cycle is “home free,” taking its fluent course in the long vault, moving back to the northern upper register. Scenes 15–17 run up to the painted arch. Scene 15, adjacent to the supporting arch of the last bay (also supporting the long vault) is effaced, while scenes 16 and 17 feature Eve doing womanly hand-work; and Cain and Abel bringing their sacrifices to the Lord (Fig. 9). The cycle continues with Cain and Abel’s story to the east of the painted arch, with the narrative uninterrupted by the presence of the arch; scenes 18–19 feature the killing of Abel by Cain and the Lord reproaching Cain (Fig. 10). Scene 20, featuring the ascension of Enoch to Heaven, appears as a single incidence amid the narrative sequels.



Fig. 9: The Sacrifice of Cain and Abel (northern upper register, west of the painted arch) (Photothèque CESC)

The next group of scenes on the upper western register is dedicated to the story of Noah. This group comprises the following scenes: 21, the Lord ordering Noah



Fig.10: Cain slays Abel and The Lord reproaches Cain (Northern upper register east of the painted arch) (Photothèque CESC)

to build the Ark; 22, the ark floating upon the Flood waters; 23, coming out of the Ark and Noah's first sacrifice to the Lord; 24, God's covenant with Noah; and Noah's second sacrifice; 25, Noah plants a vineyard (the easternmost portion of the scene, adjacent to the supporting arch of the long vault and the transept bay, is effaced).²¹

The sequence moves on to the upper register of the southern slope of the vault, the reading direction is from east to west—left to right. The narrative progression continues with three further scenes belonging to the Noah cycle: 26, Noah samples his wine (the easternmost part of the scene, adjacent to the supporting arch, is effaced); 27, Noah's intoxication and nudity; 28, Noah's malediction of Canaan. Scene 29 featuring the Lord confronting the builders of the Tower of Babylon appears as an isolated episode amid the narrative sequels. This scene

²¹ The crucial bearing points at both edges of the long barrel vault have suffered severe structural instability, which called for thorough repair. This explains the damage to the frescoes at these locations. de Maupeou and de Christen, "Saint-Savin-sur-Gartempe. Restauration" (see note 16).

is adjacent to the painted arch from the east (Fig. 11). The next narrative sequence begins to the west of the painted arch and is dedicated to the story of Abraham. Scenes 30–31–32 feature the Lord commanding Abraham to leave his native country (Fig. 12); the separation of Abraham from Lot; and Lot’s arrest and the alarm of the guard, prompting Abraham to save his kinsman. The Abraham cycle continues across the three western bays with scenes 33–37, illustrating Abraham defeating the kings and saving Lot; Abraham and Melchizedek bring offerings of bread and wine to the Lord; and the three angels visiting Abraham (scenes 36 and 37 are effaced).



Fig. 11: Building of the Tower of Babylon (Southern upper register east of the painted arch) (Photothèque CESC)

The Abraham sequence moves on to the lower register on the southern vault, now progressing from west to east, counter to text reading direction, thus creating a boustrophedon-like progression winding in zigzag.²² The first two scenes

²² Labande-Mailfert explains the “odd” sequential order that of the Creation in the north-west of the nave and the boustrophedon-like progression in the southern vault by tracing the possible constraints and conveniences of moving the scaffoldings around. Labande-Mailfert, “Le cycle de



Fig. 12: The Lord commands Abraham to leave his native land (southern upper register, west of the painted arch) (Photothèque CESC)

(38–39) at the westernmost edge, probably depicting the Binding of Isaac, are effaced. Scenes 40–42 feature the angel of God blessing Abraham, reiterating the Divine Promise; Abraham bequeaths his wealth to Isaac; and the burial of Abraham by Isaac and Ishmael. The cycle moves on eastward to the long barrel vault, where a single scene (43) is dedicated to Jacob, showing him bringing a gift of a lamb to his father, Isaac, and being blessed by him. The rest of the program on the southern lower register is dedicated to the Joseph cycle (scenes 44–52). The Joseph sequence comprises the following scenes: Joseph being sold by his brethren to the Midianites; Joseph being sold by the Midianites to Potiphar; Joseph in front of the wife of Potiphar; Joseph accused by the wife of Potiphar in

l'Ancien Testament" (see note 2), 372–73. Carolina Sarrade has a different view in this regard: she claims that the upper and lower registers on the same side were executed consecutively. According to Sarrade, this can be seen from the case of the relation between the Noah's sacrifice on the upper register and the scene immediately beneath it featuring Moses receiving the Tablet of the Covenant, where the haloes of the angels overlapping the lower border of the upper scene (which must be the border of the upper inscription band): Sarrade, "Comprendre la technique des peintures" (see note 5), 7.

front of her husband; Joseph in jail; Joseph interprets Pharaoh's dream about the seven gaunt cows consuming the seven fat cows and the seven thin ears of wheat devouring the seven fat ears of wheat; Joseph receives the ring (the royal seal) from Pharaoh in the presence of the courtiers; Joseph riding Pharaoh's chariot and being revered by the Egyptian populace; the last scene adjacent to the transept's supporting arch is partially effaced. A remnant of a *titulus*, above the scene, reads: INIMICI FRATERS, suggesting it as depicting Joseph reconciled with his brethren.²³ This stretch is interrupted by the painted arch between scenes 45 and 46: showing the selling of Joseph to Potiphar and the temptation and accusation of Joseph by the wife of Potiphar (Figs. 13–14).

The sequence continues in the lower register of the northern slope of the vault. The reading direction is now from west to east—left to right. However, since the Creation scenes occupy both registers of the westernmost three bays, the sequence continues onto the western edge of the lower register of the long barrel vault. This last narrative stretch is dedicated to the Moses cycle and includes the following scenes: the appointment of Moses by the Lord at the Burning Bush; Moses and Aaron in front of Pharaoh and his magicians; Moses' staff turning into a snake; the Israelites crossing the Red Sea; the Lord handing the Tables of the Covenant to Moses on Mount Sinai, two angels sound the trumpets (horns); the last scene, adjacent to the transept supporting arch is effaced, Labande-Mailfert conjectures that it may have been a scene showing the construction of the Tabernacle.

The analysis of the intersection-points between the biblical cycle and the painted arch fails to yield any indication that the arch had been placed at this particular location in order to divide the sequence into themes or to accentuate ideas. The arch first cuts through the Cain and Abel story, and then separates the story of the Tower of Babylon from the Abraham cycle.²⁴ The next intersection cuts through the Joseph cycle, which continues, indifferent to the arch, on either side of the arch; and the last intersection does not interrupt the story of Moses and the deliverance of the Israelites from their slavery in Egypt.

²³ Labande-Mailfert, "Le cycle de l'Ancien Testament" (see note 2), 377.

²⁴ This division could be seen as a separation between two different eras in human history, but such a separation is not compatible with the other intersections between the arch and the narrative cycle.



Fig. 13: Joseph sold to Potiphar (southern lower register, east of the painted arch, indicated by the arrow) (Photothèque CESC)

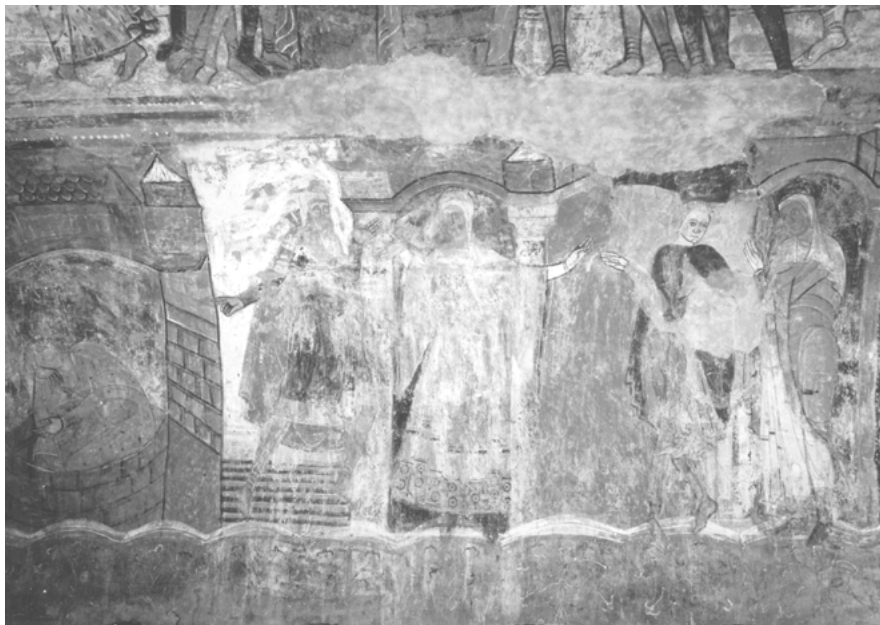


Fig. 14: Joseph and the wife of Potiphar (southern lower register, west of the painted arch) (Photothèque CESC)

Interpreting the Painted Arch

The enigmatic incidence of the painted arch has led scholars to investigate it and offer explanations as to why it has been placed in this particular spot within the architectural context and the decorative program. Some scholars have suggested that the “faux doubleau” as such might have been paired with another one, which jointly would have divided the visually-unusual long barrel-vault into three equal segments. However, all the archeological investigations have so far failed to yield any evidence to that effect.²⁵ Yves-Jean Riou, who studied the church’s construction and painting progression, has suggested that the painted arch marked the shifting point of the scaffolding reassembly.²⁶

²⁵ Baschet “Ornemaentations” (see note 2), 171.

²⁶ Yves-Jean Riou, “La construction de l’abbatiale de Saint-Savin: à propos de trois publications récentes,” *Bulletins de Société des Antiquaires de l’ouest* 4.XI (1971–1972), 415–39; here 438. See also Labande-Mailfert’s explanation on the “odd” sequential order that of the Creation in

Jérôme Baschet considered the peculiarity of the painted arch, positioned blatantly against the pronounced axial disposition of the decorative program of the nave. He pointed out that the painted arch, in conjunction with the median band, generates architectural ambivalence between the longitudinal and latitudinal dimensions of the nave. This ambivalence brings spaciousness to the viewer's attention.²⁷ Baschet also points out that in the vocabulary of the ecclesiastic architecture the longitudinal dimension stands for perseverance—*perseverentia*, while the latitudinal dimension symbolizes largess—*caritas*.²⁸ Baschet also probes into the possibility that the painted arch, jointly with the median band, functions visually as a cross. He tries to find iconographic and ornamental elements which would indicate a match between this “mega cross” and crosses depicted in other parts of the church. He maintains that since the median band and the painted arch are ornamented, they can be regarded as a *crux gemmata*, echoing the crosses in the narthex and tribune. He also contends that the oriented bust of Christ in the center medallion on the painted arch helps to combine the median band and the painted arch into a cross. This interpretation of the combination of the longitudinal and the latitudinal axes into a “mega cross” can be questioned on a number of points: this cross-form is positioned counter to the church's architectural cruciform, consisting of the length axis (the nave, the sanctuary, and the axial apsidiole); and the width axis (the transept-crossing and arms). Moreover, it cannot be grasped by the viewer as a cross from most vantage points in the nave.

In another attempt to explain the incidence of the painted arch Baschet hypothesizes that the painted arch served as a liturgical delineation, drawing the boundary between the chancel in the eastern part of the nave, furnished with stalls for the monks, and the laity's pews in the west; thus giving the cross-altar in the transept its liturgical sanctification.²⁹ This division, however, renders

the north-west of the nave, see note 20: Labande-Mailfert, “Le cycle de l'Ancien Testament” (see note 2), 348.

²⁷ Baschet, “Ornementations” (see note 2), 171.

²⁸ Baschet, “Ornementations” (see note 2), 172–173. Baschet cites the following sources: Sicard of Cremona, *Mitræle, sive, De officiis ecclesiasticis summa*, 1, 4, 20 and *Dialogus de cruce Christi*, Munich Staatsbibliothek, Clm. 14159, f. 6 (Ratisbonne, verses 1170–85).

²⁹ The cross altar is the westernmost of the three main altars: the Matutinal, in the easternmost chapel; the main one in the sanctuary; and the cross altar in the transept crossing. This tradition was established by Lanfranc of Canterbury in the latter part of the eleventh century. A. W. Klukas, “The Architectural Implications of the *Decreta Lanfranci*,” *Anglo Norman Studies VI: Proceedings of the Battle Conference 1983*, ed. R. Allen Brown (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1984), 136–71. Cited from Baschet “Ornementations” (see note 2), 173; Yvonne Labande-Mail-

the chancel excessively ample, while leaving the remaining space for the laity quite sparse.³⁰

In contrast to Baschet's arguments, which are mainly based on iconographic and liturgical grounds, my conjecture is based on formal and technical conditions. In my opinion, the painted arch was placed at this particular location due to a miscalculation in the division of registers in the western part of the nave's long barrel vault.³¹ This may be explained by the discrepancy in height between the apex of the three western bay-vaults measuring 15.80 m, and the apex of the nave's long barrel vault measuring 16.10 m.³² Consequently, the registers in the three western bays are shorter than those found east of the painted arch, where they are supposed to be higher—evenly allocated to fit the higher curve of the long vault. However, in effect, the three scenes in the upper register running from the last western bay-arch up to the painted arch are shorter than the scenes in the lower register. It appears that, when continuing the narrative imagery from the lower register of the Creation cycle in the three western bays to the upper register of the long vault, the painter designated a *pontata* equal in height to that of the western registers.³³ This could have occurred due to disregard of the discrepancy of height between the western vaults and the long vault.³⁴ However, beyond the painted arch to its east this uneven allocation of registers has been corrected thereby creating an even division of registers. This correction, in turn, caused a misalignment of the inscription band on either side of the painted arch.³⁵

fert, "L'autel matutinal disparu de Saint-Savin-sur-Gartempe," *Cahiers de civilisation medieval* 65 (1974): 41–49.

30 Labande-Mailfert has studied documents from 1629 and 1641, describing the state of repair of the Saint-Savin church, where there is a reference to the "superior choir" or "small choir" (monks singing behind the main altar) and the large choir of monks, singing in the nave. According to this documentation there had been seven doors leading into the church and a screen in the west. Labande-Mailfert, "L'autel matutinal" (see note 29), 43.

31 Sarrade describes a painting process which may corroborate my contention. Sarrade, "Comprendre la technique des peintures" (see note 5), 4.

32 Labande-Mailfert, "Le cycle de l'Ancien Testament" (see note 2), 372.

33 *Pontata* is the designated daily painting area delineated by a grid. Sarrade has noted this irregularity, attributing it to sloppiness. Conversely, I tend to see this as a miscalculation. Sarrade, "Comprendre la technique des peintures" (see note 5), 4.

34 This assumption is based on Labande-Mailfert's hypothesis that the order of execution was contingent on the convenience of repositioning the scaffolding (see note 22). Riou, "La construction de l'abbatiale de Saint-Savin" (see note 26), 438.

35 As far as I can discern, there are no traces of the inscription bands dividing the registers within the three western bays. Had they survived we would have been able to calculate with greater accuracy this deviation.

Current stratigraphic research corroborates the assumptions of earlier studies that the painted arch was an early addition, during the actual artistic *mise-en-place* and as early as the addition in the upper northern register of a Christomorphic God in the Cain and Abel sacrifice scene, adjacent to the painted arch, as well as the Christomorphic figure added in the Noah's sacrifice scene further down the register.³⁶ Even before the results of the CESC research emerged, the fact that the extant median band covers part of the center medallion on the painted arch featuring Christ indicates that the painted arch was added prior to all five repairs of the median band between the eleventh and the sixteenth centuries.³⁷ Repairs carried out in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to the Christomorphic figure's hair and halo extended over the median band in the Cain and Abel scene, implying that this figure itself was painted early on.³⁸ An important point in dating the painted arch as coinciding with that of the initial painting campaign is the fact that the added arch does not accidentally interfere with the scenes. In most cases there is a "breathing space" between the adjacent scenes and the painted arch. This breathing space is especially ample after the Cain and Abel sacrifice scene where a tree with no apparent iconographic function has been painted between the scene and the painted arch (Fig. 9).³⁹ Image density around the painted arch occurs only in the Joseph cycle flanking it. However, in general, none of the scenes are truncated by the arch.

Looking for the *raison d'être* of the painted arch, we might have to consider another addition in its vicinity, namely, that of the Christomorphic God in the Cain and Abel scene. Marcello Angheben offers a few possible explanations for adding the Christomorphic God figure: 1. the need to balance the scene aesthetically to create a symmetry between Cain and Abel; 2. the need to correct the lack of visibility of God's receiving hand extending from Heaven; 3. the wish to create continuity between the Creation scenes, where the Lord appears in every scene; and 4. the sizable figure of the Lord signifies the difference between the

36 In both scenes the receiving–blessing hand of the Lord issuing from a circular heaven can still be discerned. Marcello Angheben, "L'apport des relevés" (see note 6), 3–5; Carolina Sarade, "Comprendre la technique des peintures" (see note 5), 6–7.

37 de Maupeou and de Christen, "Restauration des peintures murales" (see note 16); Marc Thibout, "A propos de la bande faîtière" (see note 15).

38 Angheben, "L'apport des relevés" (see note 6), 3. Angheben's arguments are based on Sarade's work on the stratigraphic relevés and Paulette Hugon and Dominique Martos's scientific research. See also, Marcello Angheben, "Saint-Savin-sur-Gartempe, nouvelles recherches: problématique et method," *Couleurs et lumière à l'époque romane. Colloques d'Issoire 2005–2007* (Clermont-Ferrand: Société des amis des universités de Clermont-Ferrand, 2011), 197–225.

39 Labande-Mailfert, "Le cycle de l'Ancien Testament" (see note 2), 382, see note 20.

human and the Divine.⁴⁰ Angheben's observation regarding the lack of visibility of the Divine receiving hand and the need to add the Christomorphic God figure may be well-matched with the understanding of the painted arch as a means to correct the too short register format. The need to add the grand figure may have been a consequence of the reduced scene-size in this section of the upper register; the Christomorphic figure stretches the short register upward to the extent that the head and halo of the Christomorphic God protrudes significantly into the median band. It should be noted, that an additional Christomorphic God figure was added further down the upper register (east of the painted arch) in the scene of Noah's sacrifice; and another Christomorphic God figure appears in the Tower of Babylon scene.⁴¹ Hence, one may argue that the addition of the painted arch and the Christomorphic God figures in the sacrifice scenes constituted a single chain of events in the creative process.

The Painted Arch—an Incidental Bearer of Essence

The vast decorative program of Saint-Savin seems at first sight to have several themes that are divided in a clear-cut manner among the different parts of the edifice. Researchers have tended to look at the frescos of each part of the church separately. Consequently, there appears to be little in the way of a comprehensive study that has sought to identify a possible single unifying motif throughout the edifice. A study of the iconographic program of the entire church, however, may reveal a monument that declares itself in a subtle way as a *Martyrium* shrine.

Understanding the integrity of the entire decorative program of Saint-Savin requires a "panoramic view." Our survey will start in the narthex, where the murals feature scenes from the Apocalypse. The program commences with the events following the sounding of the Fifth Trumpet. This point of departure, in itself, marks the church as a martyrdom shrine, since at this point in the Apocalypse the 144,000 Blessed, first and foremost, the martyrs, are marked on their forehead by the Lord and spared from the cataclysmic events that are to destroy

⁴⁰ Angheben, "L'apport des relevés" (see note 6), 3.

⁴¹ A study of the ratio between the human figure and the scene size; and the relation between the image and its detail, considering the viewing distance, may shed light on the artistic impetus in this case; however, this is beyond the scope of this article.

humanity (Rev. 7:4 and 9:4–5).⁴² Amid the Apocalypse scenes in the narthex there is a panel which occupies a conspicuous place and constitutes a deviation from the otherwise “verbatim” pictorial rendering of scenes from Chapters 9–14 in St. John’s *Revelations* (Fig. 15). This panel features Maria Ecclesia enthroned, surrounded by the royal founders and protectors of the church—Charlemagne and his son Louis the Pious; St. Benoît of Aniane, the Benedictine reformer; Guillaume V, a crown prince who chose give up his right to succession and instead assuming a monastic life; and by the abbot and monks of Saint-Savin.⁴³ Maria Ecclesia is seen pointing with the index finger of her left hand to her right palm, in a gesture indicating the *stigmata*, Christ’s crucifixion palm-wounds. The *stigmata* are an emblem of martyrdom, signifying total unification with Christ. This panel, located amid the biblical narrative of the Apocalypse, may insinuate the idea of martyrdom in the eschatological spirit. This panel can be read as an introduction to the martyrs vitae, depicted in the crypt. Moreover, *Maria Ecclesia* is the authority that sanctifies this monumental shrine of martyrdom as a *locus sanctus*. In the Latin West, ecclesiastic sanctification of the *locus* and the religious image was pivotal in the reception of the image and the sacred space.⁴⁴

Hence, the narthex, the western entrance of the church, heralds the monument as a *Martyrium*; while in the east, more than 40 meters away, at the heart of church, beneath the sanctuary, the crypt features martyrdom and its promise of salvation at the End of Days. The inscription around the mandorla of the *Maestas Domini* in the sanctuary of the crypt can be read as the motto of the entire program:

⁴² Yves Christe, in his thorough reading of the *Maestas Domini* on the eastern tympanum of the narthex, maintains that the appearance of Christ is neither that of Judge in the Last Judgment nor that of pure *Deutera parousia*—the Second Coming of Christ, but, rather that of *Adventus*, analogous to an imperial triumphal entry. Christe arrives at this conclusion based on Christ’s gesture, the lack of the Instruments of the Passion, and the cross being borne by two angels in the lower left corner of the tympanum. This manner of Christ’s appearance points to theophany rather than to an indication of eschatological time. Nevertheless, Christe ties the image of the cross-bearing angels to the Apocalypse: “And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God.” (Rev. 7:2) This verse precedes the command to the four angels of destruction to harm the earth. The *Maestas Domini* in the narthex communicates temporal immediacy. Yves Christe, “À propos des peintures murales du porche de Saint Savin,” *Les Cahiers de Saint-Michel de Cuxa* 16 (1985): 235–236.

⁴³ Christe, “À propos des peintures”: 221–237 (see note 41); Favreau, *Saint Savin* (see note 6), 106–07.

⁴⁴ On sacerdotal consecration, see, Russo, “Des lettres sur l’image” (see note 7), 135; Danziger, “The Decorative Program of the Crypt” (see note 15), 99.



Fig. 15: Saint-Savin Abbey Church Narthex: Maria Ecclesia flung by Regnum & Sacerdotium and a throng (Photothèque CESCm)

DAT SANCTIS DIGN[AS MIRABILI] SORTE CORONAS
[S]I[T CLAR]RUS INDEX MERITORUM SPLENDIDUS INDEX

[He bestows the crowns upon the worthy saints for their glorious deeds: As He is a splendid guide, so He judges their merit.]⁴⁵

Between the narthex and the crypt there are further stations of veneration of the martyrs. The first station is the tribune, located directly above the narthex in the west tower, overlooking the entire nave, the sanctuary and the axial apsidiole. This magnificently decorated part of the building was most probably a private prayer quarter for high-ranking officials, ecclesiastic, monastic, royal, or noble. It features the Passion of Christ (Fig. 16) and the martyrdom of St. Denis, along with a rich gallery of saints: martyrs, confessors, and bishops, presided over by a grand figure of the church's titular Saint-Savin, identified by inscribed *titulus* (Fig. 17).

The next veneration station is the axial apsidiole at the other end of the church, beyond the sanctuary, and the ambulatory, presenting icons of biblical saints, martyrs, and confessors along with some martyrdom scenes (Figs. 18–

⁴⁵ Text translated by the author.



Fig. 16: Tribune, eastern lunette: The Deposition from the Cross (Photothèque CESC)

19). The key to the overarching theme of martyrdom is found in the crypt, where the martyrdom of the titular St. Savin and his brother St. Cyprien is told in pictorial detail, and where the motto, inscribed around the *Maiestas Domini*, promises a reward for the martyrs (Fig. 20). All these reveal the church to be a shrine dedicated to the cult of the saints, organized in a systematic erudite manner. This may explain the depiction of the busts of the saints on the added arch amid the biblical scenes, thus presenting this palimpsest in a way that is consistent with the unifying idea of the church.

Yvonne Labande-Mailfert points out that the selection of scenes from Genesis and Exodus emphasizes the sacrifices offered by the patriarchs as reference to the Eucharist and as a prefiguration for Christ's sacrifice.⁴⁶ This in turn, prompts the martyrs' *imitatio Christi*. Hence Labande-Mailfert's observation supports my interpretation of the painted arch's decoration of busts of saints as a deliberate choice matching the iconographic program of the entire edifice, incorporating it within the cult of the saints.

⁴⁶ Labande-Mailfert, "Le cycle de l'Ancien Testament" (see note 2), 391.



Fig. 17: Tribune, northern vault: St. Savin, Relevé by J. Socard, 1935, Musée de Monument français, Paris (Photothèque CESC)



Fig. 18: The axial apsidiole: Saints Portraits (Photothèque CESCO)



Fig. 19: Axial apsidiole: Burial of a martyr: The Divine receiving hand is extended from heaven (Photothèque CESC)

Epilogue: The Painted Arch—the Quintessence of the Cult of the Saints

The introduction of the busts of saints adorning the painted arch amid the narrative biblical imagery offers two different modes of seeing. In the narrative scenes, each episode is presented in the optic mode, incorporating action within an enclosed pictorial space. The optic narrative representation is an autonomous image, “preoccupied” with the interaction between its protagonists, thus remaining indifferent to the viewer who, in turn, remains external to the image. The iconic portrait, on the other hand, stands as a unique incarnation of a *persona sacra*. It is presented as a haptic embodiment—a tactile, direct and unmediated image. In spite of possessing a high degree of distillation and simplified schematic form, the iconic portrait generates tactile stimulus. The icons on the painted arch are distilled to a higher degree than the sacred portraits in the crypt and the axial apsidiole, where they appear, framed in arches, positioned frontally at the viewer’s eye level, as though sharing the space with the suppliant. The icons



Fig. 20: Ss. Savin and Cyprien Crypt Apse-Vault: *Maiestas Domini* (Photothèque CESC)

on the painted arch, however, are placed high above the viewer; they are anonymous—as opposed to all other icons in the church, as they are without inscribed *tituli*. They do not represent particular saints, but serve as an abstraction of sainthood. Formally, the saints' medallions are arranged within *schemata* that are reminiscent of the *schemata* of the “Blessed” depicted in spheres or arches in “Last Judgment” tympana and manuscripts, such as in the *Maiestas Domini* in the Vivian Bible, and in the triumphal arches mentioned above.⁴⁷ This abstraction of sainthood sums up the overarching theme of the decorative program at Saint-Savin featuring the church as a shrine for the martyrs. For the supplicant it signifies the Christian *memento mori*—the art of dying—rejecting one's earthly possessions and embracing the martyrs as *exempla*; as bearers of witness to Christ's resurrection and as the guarantors of resurrection of the righteous at the End of Days.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ *Maiestas Domini*, Vivian Bible, Paris Bibliothèque Nationale, MS lat. fol. 329v; Madeline H. Caviness, “The Divine Order of the Third Mode of Seeing” (see note 7), 108.

⁴⁸ See note 4.

The two most significant eschatological locations in the Saint-Savin church are the narthex, at the westernmost end of the building, functioning as a prefatory point, telling the event of the Apocalypse with an emphasis on the Church as bearer of Redemption; and the Ss. Savin and Cyprien crypt in the east immediately beneath the main sanctuary, telling an epic, all-encompassing hagiographic story, with an emphasis on the reward to the martyrs toward the End of Days.⁴⁹ The added painted arch in the nave might serve as a mediating point between these two significant locations. The painted arch also functions as a mnemonic device, to remind us that even in the midst of the Genesis and Exodus stories, we are still in a shrine for the saints.

The Fifth Trumpet events featured in the narthex herald the gathering and sealing of the foreheads of the 144,000 Blessed, who shall dwell in the vicinity of the Divine Throne in the Heavenly Jerusalem (Rev. 7:1–8). Perhaps one can read the huge throng behind *Maria Ecclesia* in the panel described above as the gathering of the 144,000 Blessed (Fig. 15).⁵⁰ Pilchan Lee draws a parallel between the Blessed and the Martyrs. He argues that the phase when the Blessed stand before the throne, and the lamb, attired in white robes (7:1–8), is reminiscent of the phase when the Martyrs are attired with white robes after emerging from beneath the altar (Rev. 6:11).⁵¹ The Martyrs play a core role in the eschatological content of the Church, signifying martyrdom as essential to the very being of the Church. The narthex of Saint-Savin in its introductory function may bear yet another indication of this quintessential idea: in the upper southern register we see the four angels of destruction gathered at the sound of the Fifth Trumpet, while a pair of horses with snake tails race to wreak havoc. In the westernmost upper corner of the scene there is an altar encircled by a round mandorla, while a haloed figure emerges from beneath the altar (Fig. 21). This could be an abstraction of the Martyrs, emerging from beneath the altar at the opening of the Fifth Seal.⁵² Scholars have examined the timeline

49 Even though the Latin text around the *Maiestas Domini* in the crypt refers to the bestowing of the martyrdom crowns in the present tense, the event is clearly designated to the time before the *Deutera-Parousia*—the Second coming of Christ. The present tense may give a sense of reality and immediacy to the martyrs' reward.

50 In the panel they are indeed dressed in a white tunic and golden chlamys. They all appear with what looks like golden hair, but these may be haloes.

51 Pilchan Lee, *The New Jerusalem in the Book of Revelation 21–22 in the Light of the Background in Jewish Tradition* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 257–58.

52 “And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it

and sequence of the Apocalypse and the possible overlap between the trumpets, the seals, and the bowls. Hence the combination between the Fifth Trumpet and the Fifth Seal is possible in one scene.⁵³



Fig. 21: Narthex: Blowing of the Fifth Trumpet. A saint appears from underneath the altar on the upper right corner. (Photothèque CESC)

Let us now cast a final look at the painted arch: there are five medallions on either side of the Christ medallion in the apex of the vault. On the northern lowest edge of the arch appears a sixth figure with raised arms looking upward (Fig. 3). Is it an Atlas bearing the “false arch,” supporting the long vault as a metaphor for the earthly Church bearing the firmament? If this were the case, a second Atlas at the southern edge of the arch is missing, as Atlases usually appear bilaterally in pairs.⁵⁴ Labande-Mailfert offers an explanation for this asymmetrical

was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled” (Rev. 9–11).

⁵³ Dale Ralph Davis, “The Relationship between the Seals, Trumpets, and Bowls in the Book of Revelation,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 12.1 (1969): 149–58; here 150.

⁵⁴ Such Atlases appear in corbels and in capitals in numerous Romanesque churches, such as in the door corbels and the easternmost capitals at Anzy-le-Duc.

appearance based on this figure's location within the Genesis imagery cycle. She argues that it is probably Enoch, who did not die but was taken by God as the epitome of a righteous man, who does not deserve to perish: "And Enoch walked with God: and he was not: for God took him:" (Genesis 5: 24).⁵⁵ Labande-Mailfert points out that the story of the ascent of Enoch to the land of the dead, guided by the archangel Raphael who showed him the robbed spirit of Abel, fits the location of this figure immediately after the scene of the murder of Abel by Cain.⁵⁶ However, the question remains as to whether conscious intentions and hermeneutic purposes played a role in the ordering of things.

If we look at the painted arch with its busts of saints, presided over by Christ, as a palimpsest in a more generalized way, we may understand how it galvanizes the church as an eschatological locus.⁵⁷ The choice to feature the false arch with busts of saints is complementary to and consonant with the rest of the decorative program in the following order: the Apocalypse in the narthex—the biblical eschatological chronology, elucidating the value of martyrdom; the Passion of Christ—the original martyrdom alongside the martyrdom of St. Denis—the monastic and ecclesiastic martyrdom—in the tribune; the saints and martyrs in the axial apsidiole; and the detailed hagiographic narrative in the crypt, telling the vitae of the titular saint, Savin and his brother Cyprien with the promise of reward to the martyrs toward the Last Judgment inscribed around the mandorla of the *Maiestas Domini*.

⁵⁵ Labande-Mailfert, "Le cycle de l'Ancien Testament" (see note 2), 384–85.

⁵⁶ Labande-Mailfert refers to *The Book of Enoch*, composed in the first century and *The Book of the Secrets of Enoch*.

⁵⁷ Danziger, "The Epic Hagiography" (see note 3), 230–31.

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When the Dead No Longer Rest: The Religious Significance of Revenants in Sagas set in Viking Age Settlements Around the Time of Conversion

1 Abstract

This paper applies Hans-Peter Hasenfratz's model of two cultural concepts of death—the severe (e.g., untimely, sudden) death and the social (non-biological) death¹—to revenant episodes in a number of quite similar genres of Old Norse saga literature. The corpus consists of *Sagas of the Icelanders*,² *Færeyinga saga* about the settlers of the Faroese Islands, and *Eiríks saga rauða*, one of the two *Vinland sagas* that narrate the lives of the settlers on Greenland. The revenant episodes in these sagas are set during the Time of Conversion of Iceland and the neighboring islands settled by Vikings. Based on our analysis, we argue that revenant episodes are narrative devices fulfilling one out of three functions (and in a few cases a combination of them): Revenant episodes demonstrate the necessity of Christianization, as pagan burial rituals do no longer suffice to usher the dead from the world of the living; they foreshadow the death of another character; they are a heroic test for the saga's protagonist. In the last case, they function like the revenant episodes found in the saga genre of the *Fornaldarsögur*, that conveys pagan-heroic matter in narrative patterns similar to those of Arthurian romance.

1 Hans-Peter Hasenfratz, "Tod und Leben. Der unselige Tod und der soziale Tod," *Tod, Jenseits und Identität. Perspektiven einer kulturwissenschaftlichen Thanatologie*, ed. Jan Assmann and Rolf Trauzettel. Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Historische Anthropologie, 7 (Freiburg i. Br.: Alber, 2002), 223–29.

2 *Eyrbyggja saga*, *Flóamanna saga*, *Fóstbræðra saga*, *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar*, *Hávarðar saga Ísfríðings*, *Laxdæla saga*, *Njáls saga*.

2 Introduction

Revenants are found in many Old Norse texts, literary as well as non-literary ones. As literary characters, they appear individually or in groups as corporeal undead who are restless after their biological death. They dwell in their burial sites and interact with the living in their physical shape. Their interaction and interference with the sphere of the living is in most cases considered to be negative and they usually possess special powers and great physical strength.³ Therefore, they have to be put to rest through special procedures.⁴

Concepts of revenants existed in all Germanic cultures since the Iron Age,⁵ and traces of these concepts are also found in North Germanic burial customs. The etymology of the revenant appellatives as they appear in Old Norse texts show the old age of the concept.⁶ However, Old Norse texts—apart from runic inscriptions—were only written down after the Christianization of Scandinavia. Virtually all Old Norse texts in which revenants are found have been written down in Iceland after the twelfth century, while Iceland had been Christianized already around the year 1000. The revenant episodes found in Old Norse literature might well have been influenced by Christian beliefs,⁷ or the motif might have occurred in literary contexts that link revenants to Christian discourses.

Revenants are also found in folk belief and literatures in other parts of medieval (Christian) Europe, including England, Scotland, the Low Countries, Northern and Western Germany, Northern France,⁸ as well as Eastern Europe⁹.

3 Reinhard Bodner, “Wiedergänger,” *Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde*, ed. Heinrich Beck, Dieter Geuenich, and Heiko Steuer et al., vol. 33 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2006), 598–604; here 599.

4 Bodner, *Wiedergänger* (see note 3), 601–02.

5 Rudolf Simek, *Religion und Mythologie der Germanen* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2003), 201–07.

6 I.e., the living dead in the burial mound (Simek, *Religion und Mythologie* [see note 5], 204–05); term *draugr*, ‘ghost,’ ‘revenant’ derives from i.e. **dreugh-* ‘to harm,’ ‘to deceive’ (Jan de Vries, *Altnordisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* [Leiden, Boston, and Cologne: Brill, 2000], 81).

7 Simek, *Religion und Mythologie* (see note 5), 205.

8 Nancy Caciola, “Wraiths, Revenants and Ritual in Medieval Culture,” *Past and Present* 152 (1996): 3–45; here 15–17. Paul Geiger, “Wiedergänger,” *Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens*, ed. Hanns Bächtold-Stäubli and Eduard Hoffmann-Krayer, vol. 9. Reprint (1927–1942; Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2011), 570–78; here 573. See also Claude Lecou-teux, *Geschichte der Gespenster und Wiedergänger im Mittelalter* (Cologne and Vienna: Böhlau, 1987).

Since Old Norse literature shows manifold influences from other European literatures, it seems plausible that revenants in Old Norse literature cannot be understood as ethnographic accounts of pagan beliefs. As revenants in this literature show similarities to revenants found in other Christian literatures,¹⁰ they must rather be understood as elements of folk belief that are appropriated to the narrative horizon of Old Norse literature of Christian times and its discourses. These discourses are mainly the ethnogenesis of the Icelandic society, its relation to aristocracy, and the legal systems of before and after the subjugation by Norway, as the bulk of Old Norse literary texts are supposed to have been written down for the first time during the middle and the end of the thirteenth century, when the Icelandic “Free State” got subjugated to the kingdom of Norway in 1262 after a period of civil war in Iceland.

In Old Norse literature, revenants most frequently appear in the *Sagas of the Icelanders*. The *Sagas of the Icelanders* is a genre of Icelandic sagas relating events set in the period from the settlement of Iceland by Norwegian and Irish settlers in the late ninth century until the end of the Viking Age in the middle of the eleventh century. There are neighboring texts to the *Sagas of the Icelanders*: *Færeyinga saga* and the *Vinland sagas*. They feature revenant episodes and relate events situated in the same historical time, but focus on adjacent geographical areas, in this case the Faroe Islands and Greenland.¹¹ Among other things, all of these sagas relate events around the Time of Conversion of Iceland and the surrounding islands. The corpus of this analysis consists of revenant episodes

- found in sagas belonging to the *Sagas of the Icelanders* and the above-mentioned neighboring genres (as they feature the same diegetic time),
- are set in neighboring geographical areas, and
- share the conversion of Viking settlers to Christianity as one of their topics.

The corpus fulfilling these criteria covers all sagas that belong to the above named genres containing revenant episodes. All of these genres employ a style which (by modern standards) is considered to be very realistic and relate

9 Geiger, *Wiedergänger* (see note 8), 576; Lecouteux, *Geschichte der Gespenster und Wiedergänger im Mittelalter* (see note 8), 31–33.

10 Caciola, “Wraiths Revenants and Ritual in Medieval Culture” (see note 8), 17.

11 There are further genres that would fit this definition, e.g., most of the kings’ sagas set in Norway relating events around the Time of Conversion. These saga genres are not considered here because there are only individual revenant episodes found in them—a fact that poses an interesting question about thematic horizons varying from genre to genre, which will not be investigated here.

—to some extent—to historical events and discuss historical persons. A number of these sagas, however, narrate events that seem ‘supernatural’ from a modern reader’s perspective.

The research interest in anything supernatural in Old Norse literature (and for what medieval Scandinavians considered to be supernatural) has been growing during recent years.¹² This growing interest also led to further research on revenants in Old Norse literature. While they were still considered to be a neglected research topic by Claude Lecouteux in 1986,¹³ several contributions have been made in recent years, analyzing revenants in light of the spatial turn,¹⁴ Monster Theory,¹⁵ and the history of medicine.¹⁶ In two separate contributions, both Klaus Bödl and William Sayers study revenants in individual *Sagas of the Icelanders*. While the former closely examines *Eyrbyggja saga*, the latter also studies the revenant episodes in *Laxdæla saga* and *Grettis saga*.

Bödl and Sayers interpret the revenant episodes in these works as narrative devices transporting social values about medieval Icelandic society. These values rate Norwegian kinship groups higher than Norwegian-Irish ones, as Iceland is conceptualized as a community built mostly by Norwegian settlers in the *Sagas of the Icelanders*.¹⁷ Furthermore, they argue that revenant episodes value Chris-

12 Cf. many of the contributions to the pre-print volume of the Saga Conference in Durham in 2006 on the fantastic in Old Norse literature (John McKinnell, David Ashurst, and Donata Kick, ed., *The Fantastic in Old Norse/Icelandic Literature: Sagas and the British Isles. 13th International Saga Conference. Durham* [Durham: Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, Durham University, 2006]); Agneta Ney, Henrik Williams, Fredrik Charpentier Ljungqvist, ed., *Fornaldarsögærne: Myter og virkelighed. Studier i de oldislandske fornaldarsögur Nordurlanda* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum, 2009); or the many contributions to the recent conference *Sagas, Legends and Trolls: The Supernatural from Early Modern back to Old Norse Tradition*, held 12–14 June 2014 in Tartu, Estonia, organized by the Department of Scandinavian Studies, University of Tartu.

13 Claude Lecouteux, “Gespenster und Wiedergänger. Bemerkungen zu einem vernachlässigten Forschungsfeld der Altgermanistik,” *Euphorion* 80 (1986): 219–31.

14 Klaus Bödl, *Eigi einhamr: Beiträge zum Weltbild der Eyrbyggja und anderer Isländersagas*. Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde, vol. 48 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), 94–95, 118–19, 130–33.

15 William Sayers, “The Alien and Alienated as Unquiet Dead in the Sagas of the Icelanders,” *Monster Theory. Reading Culture*, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 242–63.

16 Charlotte Kaiser, *Krankheit und Krankheitsbewältigung in den Isländersagas: Medizinhistorischer Aspekt und erzähltechnische Funktion* (Cologne: Seltmann & Hein 1998); Kirsí Kanerva, “Disturbances of the Mind and Body. Effects of the Living Dead in Medieval Iceland,” *Mental (dis)order in Later Medieval Europe*, ed. Sari Katajala-Peltomaa and Susanna Niiranen. *Later Medieval Europe*, 12 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2014), 219–42.

17 Sayers, *The Alien and Alienated* (see note 12), 247 and 256–58.

tian individuals higher than pagan ones, especially the ones engaging in wizardry,¹⁸ and emphasize the unsocial personal characteristics the revenants possessed when they were still alive.¹⁹

Nevertheless, in general descriptions of revenants in Icelandic sagas, they are not grouped by the discourses their episodes relate to, i.e., ethnogenesis, wizardry, or social behavior. Instead, they are grouped by two of the many appellatives that designate revenants in Old Norse texts,²⁰ namely *haugbúi* and *draugr*.²¹ The scholarly categories of *haugbúar* and *draugar* just differ with regard to their whereabouts after death: While *haugbúar* are always living in howes (i.e., burial mounds), *draugar* might be buried in various fashions, including howes. However, this distinction is not readily applicable to Old Norse texts, as individual revenants contain features of more than one of the supposed revenant types. In *Grettis saga*, for example, the same revenant is designated by different appellatives. The goal of our analysis is to determine the discourses of all revenant episodes found in the *Sagas of the Icelanders* and neighboring genres, and to group revenant episodes through their resulting narrative function.

We argue that in most cases the appearance of revenants is linked to a discourse on the conversion to Christianity, which is prevalent in the *Sagas of the Icelanders* and neighboring genres. In other cases, where revenant episodes function as tests of heroism, they are linked to the broader theme of power struggles between different kinship groups and social leaders, the *goðar*. These functions also convey moral values as well as they hint at the construction of a Norwegian-centered ethnogenesis of the Icelandic society in these texts, as argued by Bödl and Sayers.

In order to ascertain the narrative function of revenant episodes, we use the model of Severe Death vs. Social Death established by Hans-Peter Hasenfratz, because it does not only focus on the negatively connoted attributes of characters returning as revenants, but also on the integrative means taken to consoli-

18 Bödl, *Eigi einhamr* (see note 11), 119.

19 Bödl, *Eigi einhamr* (see note 11), 120; Sayers, *The Alien and Alienated* (see note 12), 255.

20 Appellatives for Old Norse revenants or verbs used to describe their actions are the following: *aftrgongumaðr* (m) 'ghost,' 'revenant'; *aftrganga* (f), *aftrgangr* (m) 'haunting,' 'walking again'; *ganga aftr* (vb) 'to come back as ghost'; *draugr* (m) 'ghost,' 'revenant'; *haugbúi* (m) 'howe dweller' as well as different words for 'howe' like *haugr* (m) and *dys* (f) and related vocabulary like *dysja* (vb) 'to bury in a stone howe' or *haugføera* (vb) and *haugganga* (f) 'to go into a howe' (Den Arnamagnæanske Kommission København, ed., *Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog/A Dictionary of Old Norse Prose* [Copenhagen: Den Arnamagnæanske Kommission, 1989–], available online at <http://onp.ku.dk/> (last accessed on 4 January 2014).

21 E.g., Simek, *Religion und Mythologie* (see note 5), 204–05; Sayers, *The Alien and Alienated* (see note 12), 225–26.

date the dead with the living. Hasenfratz thus allows for interpreting the function of characters returning as revenants that were popular in their respective narrative worlds and followed the social norms.

3 Severe Death and Social Death

In 2002, Hans-Peter Hasenfratz presented a phenomenological model of cultural concepts of death, drawing on a wide range of ethnological and literary sources and covering many cultures from various periods.²² While he also published significant scholarship on Germanic and Old Norse religion, his paper references only a single Old Norse episode.²³ The model he presents is, however, very enlightening for the understanding of revenant episodes in Old Norse literature. Hasenfratz discusses three cultural concepts of death. He operates with the terms

- (1) Peaceful Death (*seliger Tod*): A person dies biologically by causes or in circumstances considered normal by its community (e.g., of old age);
- (2) Severe Death (*unseliger Tod* or *schlimmer Tod*): A person dies biologically but has to die again;
- (3) Social Death (*sozialer Tod*): A person is alive but is considered dead by her/his community.²⁴

Severe Death is the cause for the Restless Dead (Hasenfratz: *Wiedergänger*). A person is restless after death if s/he dies outside of the norms of the community: morally, spatially, or before her/his time. Among the causes for Severe Death identified by Hasenfratz are accidents, misdeeds, battles, death in childbed, before being married, before acquitting oneself of a promise, being accursed by one's community, being a performer of black magic, and/or capital punishment. The Restless Dead haunt the living, drain their vitality, and draw them into their mode of existence.²⁵ In Old Norse literature, characters that return from the dead died by causes similar to those for Severe Death: performance of black magic, death through capital punishment, death by accident, or outside of (most often Christian) norms, i.e., in an area without a churchyard.

²² Hasenfratz, *Tod und Leben* (see note 1).

²³ Hasenfratz, *Tod und Leben* (see note 1), 226, see also Hans-Peter Hasenfratz, *Die religiöse Welt der Germanen: Ritual, Magie, Kult, Mythos*. Herder-Spektrum, 4145 (Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 1994), 70–71.

²⁴ Hasenfratz, *Tod und Leben* (see note 1), 223.

²⁵ Hasenfratz, *Tod und Leben* (see note 1), 223–24.

Hasenfratz names a number of magical means of defense usually employed to prevent harm from the Restless Dead (light, fire, noise, bells, garlic, salt, water, salt water), as well as means for preventing a deceased person from haunting the living as a restless corpse. These means include mainly (a) immobilization and (b) dissolution of the corpse, or by applying (c) integrative means.

- (a) Immobilization is achieved by beheading the corpse and placing the head face down by its feet, staking the corpse, or covering its grave with thorns.
- (b) Dissolution of the corpse is achieved by cremation (or burning a subject as capital punishment), spreading the ashes, or dismemberment.
- (c) Integrative means aim at redeeming the cause for the deceased person's Severe Death, e.g., by fulfilling the promise made by the deceased person, by performing the proper funeral rites, or by lifting the curse. Integrative means include both precautions to a deceased person's becoming restless (*Totenhilfe*) and their exorcism.

Capital punishment, especially of wizards, apparently also raises the fear of them returning as revenants. The integrative means described by Hasenfratz include the rites performed in the episode in *Eyrbyggja saga* in which Þórólfr bægifótr suddenly dies when facing severe social conflicts.²⁶

Furthermore, Hasenfratz generally characterizes the relationship between the living and the dead in two respects: The dead want to return to the living or to take the living to their sphere (*Nachholen*). Consequently, the living limit the contact with the dead to certain festivities and thus ensure that they do not miss the dead too much (*Nachweinen*).²⁷ As Hasenfratz notes, the effort put into such rituals is not much different from the precautions taken against the Restless Dead.²⁸

The living can suffer Social Death

- (1) after spatial departure from their community
 - (a) at free will (e.g., hermits), or
 - (b) not at free will (e.g., war captives, stray people).
- (2) because of an existence in contradiction to their community's norms
 - (a) by not abiding by the norms of their community through their behavior, or
 - (b) by not fulfilling their community's standards, e.g., through age, sickness, or poverty, or

²⁶ Hasenfratz, *Tod und Leben* (see note 1), 226, see also Hasenfratz, *Die religiöse Welt der Germanen* (see note 20), 70–71.

²⁷ Hasenfratz, *Tod und Leben* (see note 1), 226.

²⁸ Hasenfratz, *Tod und Leben* (see note 1), 226.

(c) by belonging to a particularly low social rank,

which eventually might lead to their spatial removal from their community.²⁹

Persons having suffered Social Death might be regarded as revenants (*Wiedergänger*) when encountered by members of their community. This might especially apply to persons who had gone astray or return from capture and were (socially) considered to be dead. The Socially Dead might also represent the dead in death cult rites. Eventually, if a person who suffered Social Death dies, her/his death might be severe, with all the consequences of Severe Death.³⁰

This combination of Social and Severe Death and their common cause in social deviancy are especially relevant when analyzing revenant episodes in Old Norse literature. The *Sagas of the Icelanders* place a focus on social conflicts, sometimes featuring individuals considered to be problematic by their community. These problematic individuals not always suffer Social Death in any ritualized way. They are restless after their death, but their deaths most often fulfill the criteria of Severe Death, and they harm the living. Then there are positively connoted characters that die of Severe Death but still become restless. They are harmless and only demand a Christian burial. This latter type shows that Old Norse revenants do not need to mark negatively connoted values. Their appearance can well be a literary mode of narrating the expulsion of a social group's suddenly deceased member from the abstract 'space' of the living to the one of the dead.

4 Analysis

The sample episodes discussed here serve as examples for the interpretation and classification of the individual revenant episodes in the corpus, out of which section 5 gives an overview. The examples are chosen for being typical for the more complex types of revenant episodes.

²⁹ Hasenfratz, *Tod und Leben* (see note 1), 227.

³⁰ Hasenfratz, *Tod und Leben* (see note 1), 227.

4.1 Sigríðr, Þorsteinn Eiríksson, and Garðarr verkstjóri in *Eiríks saga rauða*

The first example is taken from *Eiríks saga rauða*, a saga from the early thirteenth century³¹ about the discovery and colonization of Greenland and the journeys to Vinland.³² In conjunction with *Groenlendinga saga*, it belongs to the most important texts about the discovery of North America. The two sagas are therefore also referred to as the *Vínland sagas*.

The saga relates to the lives of Eiríkr rauði Þorvaldsson and his descendants. After his banishment from Norway, he discovers Greenland and is amongst its first settlers. His son Leifr Eiríksson then discovers Vínland. Eirík's other son, Þorsteinn marries Guðríðr Þorbjarnardóttir Vífilssonar, who came from Iceland with her family in order to settle in Greenland. Before Guðríðr even meets Þorsteinn, the *spákona* (seeress) Þorbjörg, also called lítilvölva, predicts her union with Þorsteinn Eiríksson, providing her with an honorable marriage in Greenland. This marriage, Þorbjörg soothsays, will not be a long-lived one because her future lies in Iceland, where she will bring forth a famous line of numerous descendants.³³

Þorsteinn dies in the revenant episode analyzed in the following section, and after his death, Guðríðr marries Þorfinnr karlsefni, the other main character of *Eiríks saga*. Þorfinnr tries to find Vínland, too, but encounters hostile natives who bar him from settling there. He then returns to Greenland and eventually settles down with Guðríðr in Iceland. The revenant episode therefore seems to fulfill the *spákona's* prediction—in a way that is as extraordinary as receiving a *spákona's* prophecy. Considered to be a plot device, Þorsteinn's premature death provides Guðríðr with the opportunity to meet her final husband and to become the ancestress of a famous line of descendants.

In this revenant episode in *Eiríks saga rauða*, ch. 6, three characters return from the dead after having succumbed to a disease: the unpopular overseer Garðarr, Sigríðr, and Þorsteinn Eiríksson. The latter is married to Guðríðr.³⁴ They

31 The text exists in two redactions differing especially in style in the codices Hauksbók from the early fourteenth and Skálholtsbók from the fifteenth centuries (Else Ebel, *Die Vínlandsagas: ausgewählte Texte zur Entdeckung Amerikas durch die Wikinger* [Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1973], 1). The difference between the redactions, however, is not significant for this analysis.

32 Hermann Pálsson and Rudolf Simek, ed., *Lexikon der Altnordischen Literatur*. Kröners Taschenausgabe, 490 (Stuttgart: Kröner, 2007), 76–77, s.v. *Eiríks saga rauða*.

33 Ólafur Halldórsson, ed., *Eiríks saga rauða*. Íslensk fornrit, 4 (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenska Fornritafélag, 1985), ch. 4.

34 Halldórsson, *Eiríks saga rauða* (see note 33), ch. 6.

live on a farm in Vestribyggð, near the farm of another married couple named Sigríðr and Þorsteinn. When Guðríðr and Þorsteinn Eiríksson visit the other couple in winter, a sudden disease (*sótt*) breaks out in the area, killing many people.

The first to die is the overseer Garðarr, whom the narrator describes as unpopular (*ekki vinsæll*). After him, people die one after another. After a little while, Sigríðr and Þorsteinn Eiríksson get sick as well. In a fever dream, Sigríðr has a vision in which she sees a group of dead people—among them Þorsteinn Eiríksson and herself—and therewith foresees their impending doom. The next morning, Sigríðr is dead but resurrects soon and tries to crawl under the sheets with her husband. He calls Þorsteinn Eiríksson for help who tries to immobilize Sigríðr by laying an axe onto her chest. Soon thereafter, Þorsteinn Eiríksson dies as well, but resurrects from the dead soon too, and wants to talk to his wife Guðríðr.

He gives her some instructions and adds that one could only be redeemed by true faith. Guðríðr and Þorsteinn (the namesake of Þorsteinn Eiríksson and husband of the late Sigríðr) interpret this as a divine omen. Þorsteinn Eiríksson further notes that all who had died must be buried in accordance with Christian fashion, at a church, and not in the pagan way. He goes on that they have to burn Garðarr on a funeral pyre because he considers him to be the reason behind the return of the dead as revenants.³⁵

The reason for the characters to die in this episode is a disease (*sótt*), which is not specified any further. It does not become clear from the text what causes this disease or if there is an implied causality for its outbreak at all. One of the characters, Þorsteinn Eiríksson, however, believes Garðarr to be the reason why the deceased characters return as revenants. Furthermore, there is no cure to the disease, and the characters affected by the outbreak do not investigate. The focus lies on how to put the dead to rest. This is achieved through Christian funerary rites. However, Garðarr is not a Christian. Þorsteinn Eiríksson's remark that the Christian faith is to be upheld in Greenland underlines the religious dimension of the return of the dead in this episode. This dichotomy between Christianity and Non-Christianity is further expanded by a value statement by the narrator describing Garðarr as being unpopular.

Interpreting the episode in Hasenfratz's terms, Garðarr can be considered as being Socially Dead because of being unpopular. By contrasting him with Christians in this episode, the narrative aligns not being a Christian in Christian times with suffering Social Death. In accordance with Hasenfratz's model, dying while

³⁵ Ebel, *Die Vínlandsagas* (see note 31), 32.

being Socially Dead means to have suffered a Severe Death which leads to the dead in question to return as revenants.

Dying of a disease, however, is not uncommon for characters who return as revenants when looking at a broader corpus of Old Norse revenant episodes.³⁶ It would thus be easy to explain within the usual boundaries of the motif that all people who died of a disease return as revenants, including Christians, like Sigríðr and Þorsteinn Eiríksson. The direct connection between the unrest of the dead and Garðarr as a heathen, however, turns the fight against this outbreak into a purely religious matter. This religious aspect is further underlined by Garðarr being the first one to die of the disease. This explains why no cure is sought afterwards beyond religious measures such as proper funerary rites.

The episode thus features a Socially Dead character who dies of something that in itself is a Severe Death (a disease), and functions as a *Nachzieher* in the way that the apparently contagious disease also kills other characters. Garðarr's unrest is ended by burning and thus dissolving his corpse on a funeral pyre—as is typical for malevolent revenants in Old Norse narratives³⁷—while the Christian revenants give instructions about being put to rest with Christian funerary rites, which can be understood as an integrative means of ending their unrest. The funeral types used to isolate the dead from the community of the living—one through the integrative measure of a norm-compliant Christian burial and one by dissolution through not norm-compliant cremation—present a positively and negatively connoted expulsion of the dead—from the community of the living side by side in a single episode.

Typical for the Old Norse corpus, it combines a Social Death by unpopularity with a Severe Death by disease and a subsequent *Nachziehen* through that same disease in the course of an outbreak. And as we have seen, the usual Social Death due to unpopularity in this episode is expanded by another Social Death due to not being Christian.

36 Cf. Þorsteinn, Sigríðr, and Garðarr in *Eiríks saga rauða*, Árán in *Egils saga einhenda*, Þórgunna, Þóroddr, Þórir viðleggr, Þórðr kausi, Þórgríma galdrakinn, and a sauðamaðr in *Eyrbyggja saga*, Þorgerðr in *Flóamanna saga*, and Óláfr Geirstaðaalf in *Óláfs þáttir Geirstaðaalfs*.

37 Árán in *Egils saga einhenda*, Garðar in *Eiríks saga rauða*, Þórólfr bægifótr in *Eyrbyggja saga*, Gyða and Þorgerðr in *Flóamanna saga*, Hrappr in *Laxdæla saga*, Klaufi in *Svarfdæla saga*.

4.2 Sigmundr Brestisson, Þórir Beinirson, and Einarr Suðreyingr in *Færeyinga saga*

The second episode to be analyzed here is taken from *Færeyinga saga*, which relates the colonization of the Faroe Islands and the lives of the first colonists. The saga was supposedly written down in Iceland at the beginning of the thirteenth century, but the text exists only as interpolations in *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* and *Óláfs saga helga* in Fláteyjarbók (fourteenth century) as well as in other versions of these sagas.³⁸

The main characters of this saga are Sigmundr Brestisson and Þrándr í Gøtu Þorbjarnarson, who are opponents in a long feud about the control over the Faroe Islands, during which Þrándr attempts to kill Sigmundr several times. Likewise, Sigmundr tries to avenge his father's death, who was slain by Þrándr and his men. Eventually, the conflict escalates when Sigmundr humiliates Þrándr by forcing him to become Christian.³⁹ When Þrándr launches an attack on Sigmundr's homestead, Sigmundr, Þórir, and Einarr only barely manage to escape by leaping off a cliff into the sea.⁴⁰ While Þórir and Einarr drown Sigmundr reaches the shore alive but is very exhausted. He is found by the farmer Þórgrímr illi ("the bad") who kills him, takes his gold ring,⁴¹ and buries him hastily on the beach together with Þórir, whose body was washed up at the shore, too.⁴²

The following revenant episode takes place some years after the disappearance of Sigmundr, as Þrándr decides to offer a settlement to Þuríðr, Sigmundr's widow, including a marriage between Sigmundr's daughter Þóra and Leifr Qzurarson, Þrándr's foster son. This marriage would consolidate Þrándr's control over the Faroe Islands.⁴³ In order to agree to the settlement, however, Þuríðr and her family demand from Þrándr and Leifr to find out what had happened to Sigmundr.

38 Pálsson and Simek, *Lexikon der Altnordischen Literatur* (see note 30), 88, s.v. *Færeyinga saga*; 290–92, s.v. *Óláfs saga hins helga*; 292–94, s.v. *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*.

39 Ólafur Halldórsson, ed., "Færeyinga saga," *Færeyinga saga*. Íslenz fornrit 15 (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag, 2006), ch. 31.

40 Halldórsson, *Færeyinga saga* (see note 39), ch. 37.

41 The gold ring is predicted to be Sigmundr's bane. One day, while Sigmundr is visiting King Óláfr helgi, he sees the ring and wants to take it from Sigmundr. Since the ring was a gift from Jarl Hákon (Halldórsson, *Færeyinga saga* [see note 37], ch. 23), Sigmundr does not want to part from it. Slightly offended, Óláfr predicts that the ring will bring Sigmundr no luck (Halldórsson, *Færeyinga saga* [see note 39], ch. 33).

42 Halldórsson, *Færeyinga saga* (see note 37), ch. 39.

43 Halldórsson, *Færeyinga saga* (see note 37), ch. 40.

Þrándr and Leifr consult Þórgrímr because they assume that Sigmundr and his men had been washed up near his farmstead after their flight from the battle.⁴⁴ Þórgrímr pretends to know nothing about the escaped men. Nevertheless, Þrándr already suspects the murder, and thus they stay at Þórgrímr's farm. After a while, three men enter the house and approach the fireplace. The first one to appear is Einarr Suðreyingr. He is all wet and stretches out his hands toward the fire for a moment, then leaves. The second one is Þórir. Like Einarr, he enters and holds his hands toward the fire, then leaves. Finally, Sigmundr walks in, all gory, with his head in his hand, and stands by the fireplace for a while. After this event, Þrándr is sure about the murder, and they find the gold ring of Sigmundr in the house. Then, Þórgrímr shows them where he buried Sigmundr and Þórir. They move the bodies of Þórgrímr's victims to the church Sigmundr had built earlier at Skúfey and rebury them there. The *þing* later convicts Þórgrímr of his crime.

The episode functions as a means to rehabilitate Þrándr, since until then he is displayed as a rather negative character who opposes the family of Brestir in his pursuit of power over the Islands. Þrándr himself suggests a settlement with Sigmundr's family and makes sure that Þórgrímr is convicted by the *þing*. After the settlement, the formerly hostile families are allied for a while, and Þrándr's foster son Leifr ascends to be one of the most important leaders on the Faroe Islands. Þrándr more or less holds up the faith and even becomes the foster father to Leifr's son. Leifr himself supersedes Sigmundr and takes his place in the relations with the Norwegian Kings. But the peace holds only for a while. Like in most feud stories, the opposition to Sigmundr is not forgotten, and even Þrándr distrusts his former foster son who is now an ally to his former opponents and often opposes him in socio-political affairs.

Interpreted in the terms developed by Hasenfratz, the revenant episode features the Severe Death of the characters Sigmundr Brestisson, Þórir Beinirson, and Einarr Suðreyingr, as Sigmundr dies by being murdered out of greed, and the other two through drowning. Their unrest is ended by integrative measures: experiencing justice and being put to rest with proper funerary rites, again a Christian burial. In the Old Norse corpus, this episode represents a simpler type in which Christians suffer Severe Death and return to ask for integrative measures.⁴⁵ This kind of integrative measure represents what can be understood as an expulsion of the dead from the world of the living, i.e., the translation of a suddenly deceased member of a cultural group from the abstract 'space' of the

⁴⁴ Halldórsson, *Færeyinga saga* (see note 37), ch. 41.

⁴⁵ Cf. motif type 1 under section 5.

living to the abstract ‘space’ of the dead after a sudden death (*bráðdauðr*) as a type of Severe Death. In the case of this episode alone, this type of motif is complicated by the revenants implicitly making justice possible, showing that this type of Christian revenant episode is open to be connected with other topics than religion, such as the legal system.

4.3 Þorgerðr in *Flóamanna saga*

The third episode considered here is taken from *Flóamanna saga*, which is categorized into the genre of the *Sagas of the Icelanders* although it features many adventurous episodes and includes strong hagiographic influences. The saga is extant in two versions from the early fourteenth century.⁴⁶ Its main character is Þorgils Þorðarson, and it starts by recounting the colonization of Iceland by Þorgils’ Norwegian ancestors, who are forced by Haraldr hárfagri to leave the country. Þorgils is amongst the first people in Iceland who accept Christendom, but as a result, he faces the wrath of his former god Þórr who hunts him in his dreams and puts obstacles in his way during his adventurous journeys.

The revenant episode discussed here is featured at the beginning of Þorgils’ journey to Greenland. Just after Þórr haunts Þorgils’ dreams and kills his cattle, Þorgils is invited by Eiríkr rauði (the Red) to join his colony and is accompanied by his neighbor Jósteynn and his family of Kalfsholt.⁴⁷ The episode underlines the strength of Þorgils’ faith in the Christian god. The revenant episode is only one of several extraordinary obstacles Þorgils faces before he reaches the colony of Eiríkr rauði, Brattahlíð, but he never falters in his faith. Right from the beginning of their sea journey, Þorgils and his group face bad weather conditions which lead to hunger and dispute. In addition, Þórr appears in Þorgils’ dreams again and threatens to thwart his mission unless he is willing to deny Christendom.⁴⁸ Þorgils, however, remains steadfast in his faith, and so the group shipwrecks and is forced to build a hut for the winter where they have landed.⁴⁹ The episode underlines the strength of Þorgils’ faith in the Christian god.

When Þorgils and his companions spend the winter near the site where they shipwrecked, each group occupies one half of the hut. Þorgils’ group is success-

⁴⁶ Pálsson and Simek, *Lexikon der Altnordischen Literatur* (see note 30), 94, s.v. *Flóamanna saga*.

⁴⁷ Þórhallur Vilmundarson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson, ed., “*Flóamanna saga*,” *Harðar saga*. Íslenzk fornrit, 13 (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag, 1991), 229–37; here ch. 20.

⁴⁸ Vilmundarson and Vilhjálmsson, *Flóamanna saga* (see note 47), ch. 21.

⁴⁹ Vilmundarson and Vilhjálmsson, *Flóamanna saga* (see note 47), ch. 22.

ful in providing for themselves by fishing and is pious and quiet in the evenings. Jósteinn's group, however, is less successful and always celebrates in the evenings. One day around yule, they hear a loud call outside of the hut, and the next day they hear a loud knock on the door. One man runs out in anticipation of good news, but immediately turns mad and dies the next morning. The next night, the same happens: One man runs outside, turns mad, and dies. Yet while dying, he tells the others that he has seen the man who had died before, walking towards him. After that, a disease (*sótt*) spreads amongst Jósteinn's group, of which he and six of his men die. Because of the winter, the bodies are merely hastily buried in the snow. Only Þórarinn, the last one of Jósteinn's men to die, is buried under the shipwreck. After yule, the dead start to walk again (*aptr-ganga*).⁵⁰ The revenants haunt especially that part of the house in which Jósteinn and his men had lived. Because they supposedly prevent the others from leaving the place, Þorgils arranges for the corpses to be burned on a pyre (*bál*). After that, the haunting ends.

This episode features the Social Death of a group of people by behaving unsocially, keeping their hard-working neighbors awake, and not respecting yule as a holy period (both in the Christian and in the heathen sense). Fitting the Old Norse theme of yule as a period in which extraordinary events might happen, the first two deaths occur by madness, the reason for which is not supplied by the text. The following disease (*sótt*) is a typical way of *Nachziehen*, as stated above. It is relevant, however, that this disease only affects the group that can be regarded to have suffered Social Death, supplying another argument for interpreting their behavior as a reason for Social Death. Since as a Christian, Þorgils survives the outbreak of the disease with his group, the dichotomy between the two groups also seems to be a religious one.

The dead are put to rest again through dissolution by way of cremation on a funeral pyre, except for the last one who is buried under the shipwreck. Since cremation does not comply with the norm of Christian funerary rites in saga literature (which are earth burials), this furthermore hints at the religious dimension of the conflict. Because the living are apparently hindered by the dead from leaving the shelter they built for themselves, the dissolution of the heathens can also be interpreted as a necessary act on a symbolic level. Ideologically, this is in line with the hagiographical character of the text and matches the placing of this episode as one of several tests of faith Þorgils has to endure as a recent Christian convert, as outlined above. These two types of funeral—one with the integrative measure of a norm-compliant Christian burial and the other through dissolution

50 Vilmundarson and Vilhjálmsson, *Flóamanna saga* (see note 47), ch. 22.

by not norm-compliant cremation—demonstrate the positively and negatively connoted expulsion of the dead from the community of the living side by side in a single episode—just like in the first example taken from *Eiríks saga rauða*.

Again, the Christian aspect is salient and coupled with the yule motif that also functions in heathen diegetic time, i.e., sagas or parts of sagas that are set in heathen times and especially in parts of sagas that are set at the shift from the heathen to the Christian order. While these three episodes are only a very small portion of the Old Norse revenant episodes, the analysis so far can hopefully show that very often they rather address the change of religion, termed *siðaskipti* ('change of rites') in Old Norse.

While religion is soberly understood in this phrase as a community of rituals, this is obviously true when it comes to Christian funerary rites and the prevalence of Christian rules of behavior (no feasting during yule). Apparently, Christianization also means that the heathen rites of translating the deceased to the realm of the dead are very vividly depicted as having stopped to work during the Time of Conversion around the year 1000, at the same time when the settlement of Greenland also took place according to saga literature. However, the Old Norse corpus of revenant episodes is not uniform and the last episode does not feature a salient Christian discourse, even though the morality proposed by it is compatible with medieval Christian morality.

4.4 Hrappr in *Laxdæla saga*

The last episode to be examined here is taken from *Laxdæla saga* which is one of the most comprehensive *Sagas of the Icelanders* and covers the family history and fate of eight generations. It was probably composed in the middle of the thirteenth century and merges known facts from ninth to eleventh century history with motifs from the heroic tales about Brynhildr and Sigurðr.⁵¹

This revenant episode is related quite early in the saga, within the story about the descendants of Ketill flatnefr Bjarnason who is the first in a series of major characters in *Laxdæla saga*. Víga-Hrappr Sumarliðarson owns a farmstead in the neighborhood of Hǫskuldr Dala-Kollsson,⁵² a rich and respected man in the Laxár valley and great-great-grandson of Unnr the Wise, and his

51 Pálsson and Simek, *Lexikon der Altnordischen Literatur* (see note 30), 244–45, s.v. *Laxdæla saga*.

52 Einar Ólafur Sveinsson, ed., “*Laxdæla saga*,” *Laxdæla saga*. Íslensk fornrit, 5 (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenska Fornritafélag, 1934), 1–248; here ch. 10.

son Óláfr pái with his concubine Melkorka (who is actually an abducted princess of Ireland).

Hrappr is an unpopular man in the district because he acts violently against his neighbors.⁵³ Moreover, he is half Scot, which indicates his inferior standing in medieval Icelandic society. He is also a convicted criminal who had fled to Iceland to escape from a sentence on the Hebrides, where he had been born. Like on the Hebrides, his new Icelandic neighbors suffer from his unsocial behavior.⁵⁴ After Óláfr has arrived in the district to live with his foster father Þórðr, Hrappr's aggression slightly wanes, as Óláfr constitutes a counterbalance to Hrappr.⁵⁵ However, by this time, he is already very old and dies soon.

By the time Hrappr walks again, Óláfr pái has already revealed his true origin as grandson of King Mýrkjartan of Ireland, has made friends with King Haraldr gráfeldr and Queen Gunnhildr in Norway, and, back on Iceland, has moved to the estates that had been owned by Hrappr but were then deserted. It then belongs to Óláfr's duty to fight the revenant Hrappr as he begins to haunt the farmstead.⁵⁶ By freeing his estates from this plague,⁵⁷ Óláfr demonstrates thus that he is a formidable man, who possesses every feature of a noble chieftain in Icelandic society.

The revenant episode begins as Hrappr gets old and his vigor dwindles. He tells his wife how to proceed with his funeral and that he wants to be buried standing upright in the doorway of the great hall so that he can keep an eye on his property.⁵⁸ His wife complies and after his funeral, he starts to walk again "heavily" (*gekk mjök aptr*). He kills several people of the household and scares the others away so that the farm and the district are deserted. Hǫskuldr takes it upon himself to put an end to this. He and some men exhume Hrappr and bring him to a remote place where neither people nor livestock are likely to go; consequently, his haunting (*aptrganga*) subsides for a while.⁵⁹

When Óláfr pái moves to Hrappr's now deserted farmstead, everything is going well, until one day when the stockman refuses to herd the cattle any longer. Óláfr goes with him to see what is bothering him. As they arrive at the fold yard, they see Hrappr standing in the gate. Óláfr wrestles with Hrappr, but the latter disappears. In the morning, Óláfr goes to Hrappr's cairn and digs him

53 Sveinsson, *Laxdæla saga* (see note 50), ch. 10.

54 Sveinsson, *Laxdæla saga* (see note 50), ch. 10 and 17.

55 Sveinsson, *Laxdæla saga* (see note 50), ch. 16 and 17.

56 Sveinsson, *Laxdæla saga* (see note 50), ch. 24.

57 Sveinsson, *Laxdæla saga* (see note 50), ch. 24.

58 Sveinsson, *Laxdæla saga* (see note 50), ch. 10.

59 Sveinsson, *Laxdæla saga* (see note 50), ch. 17.

up again. They find him undecayed, so they burn his corpse on a pyre (*bál*), and scatter his ashes at sea. After that, Hrappr's haunting stops.⁶⁰

Hrappr is another illustration of unpopular characters returning as malevolent revenants in Old Norse literature. In his case, the reason for his unpopularity is clearly explained: He is aggressive and even violent toward his neighbors. This is a typical feature of an *ójafnaðarmaðr*, an unjust person, in the *Sagas of the Icelanders* and the shorter *Íslendinga þættir*. Such persons cause trouble. And how society deals with such persons, forms a substantial part of the stories in which they appear.

Hrappr is also an apparently greedy person, since he does not want to leave his affairs behind and rather watches his household. This is a classical motivation for revenants, going by Hasenfratz's overview, and it cannot be clearly interpreted as an either Christian or heathen vice. For example, heathen societal rules allowed for his wife to inherit the farm and all its goods, and just like in medieval Christian Iceland, she could have married again. Interpreted by both heathen and medieval Christian standards, Hrappr does not let go of what he owns upon his death. This can be understood as either greed by heathen as well as Christian standards or as an attachment to worldly matters only by Christian standards. Hrappr's death can be interpreted as Social Death. Like other unpopular characters, he returns as a revenant.⁶¹ In most cases, this haunting leads to further characters dying after physical contact with the initial revenant (*Nachziehen*) and then returning as revenants themselves.⁶²

5 Typology

The analysis shows that the phenomenological model of revenants subsumes the instances of the ones in Old Norse literature analyzed in this paper. This indicates that the revenant episodes are in accordance with those of medieval continental Europe and beyond. As the discussion of the examples showed, the Old Norse episodes are often set in the Time of Conversion, and the morality propagated by them is at least compatible with Christian morality, even if they are not always marked as Christian. While the episodes can be subsumed under Hasenfratz's model, they show some degree of openness for variation. This enables an

⁶⁰ Sveinsson, *Laxdæla saga* (see note 50), ch. 24.

⁶¹ Cf. Garðarr in *Eiríks saga rauða*, Jósteinn and his people in *Flóamanna saga*, Þórólfr bægifótr in *Eyrbyggja saga*, Glámr and Kárr inn gamli in *Grettis saga*.

⁶² Cf. the above-mentioned, except for Hrappr in *Laxdæla saga* and Kárr inn gamli in *Grettis saga*.

easy integration of the revenant motif in different saga contexts in order to highlight different discourses. It might also explain the abundance of such episodes in Old Norse literature.

The revenant episodes in the collection of sagas analyzed here—belonging to the genres of *Sagas of the Icelanders* and genres about further Viking Age settlements on the Faroe Islands, Greenland, and Vinland—can be grouped into four motif types, according to their narrative function derived from the Hasenfratzian analysis:

- Type 1: Christian characters that are revenants until receiving a Christian burial (cf. table 1).
- Type 2: Unsocial and sometimes heathen characters turning into malevolent revenants whose dissolution promotes moral or especially Christian values (cf. table 3).
- Type 3: Revenants whose exorcisms function as tests of heroism or political power of a protagonist,
 - a: not coupled with promoting moral or especially Christian values (cf. table 4),
 - b: coupled with promoting moral or especially Christian values (cf. table 5).
- Type 4: Revenants foreshadowing the Severe Death of other characters (cf. table 2).

Motif type 1, featuring Christian characters that haunt the living until receiving a Christian burial, is very homogenous. The characters in question are morally positive ones in the narrative and only haunt until they receive a Christian burial. In the case of Þorgunna in *Eyrbyggja saga*, an episode canonically cited in scholarship on revenants, the haunting is even benevolent since she aides the people carrying her body to the funeral site, which is a couple of days' journey away from the site of her death.

In a similar fashion, motif type 4, featuring revenants foreshadowing the Severe Death of other characters, consists of characters who do not feature negatively connoted morals in the narrative, but have suffered a Severe Death (apart from the group of dead people appearing in *Víga-Glúms saga* who had not died during the narrative). They only appear once, foreshadowing as a vision the Severe Death of another character. In this way, they are a variant to the *fylgja* motif, showing a character's animal spirit being fatally wounded or dying (sometimes fighting the animal spirit of its adversary).

Motif type 2 is the most frequently discussed type in scholarship on Old Norse revenants. The difference from the other, less discussed types is clear when looking at these episodes in Hasenfratz's terms of Cultural Death. The epi-

Table 1: Motif type 1 – Christian characters that are revenants until receiving a Christian burial

Work	<i>Eiríks saga rauða</i>	<i>Færeyinga saga</i>	<i>Eyrbyggja saga</i>
Revenants	Þorsteinn, Sigríðr	Sigmundur Brestisson, Þórir Beinirson, Einarr Suðreyingr	Þorgunna
Characteristics	Christians	valiant Vikings	foreign, popular
Severe Death (cause)	disease	murdered	disease
Social Death (cause)	no	no	no
Activity	haunting	haunting	haunting (benevolent)
Funeral before return (type)	no	no (Einarr); shallow grave (Sigmundur, Þórir)	no
Immobilization	axe put to her chest (Sigríðr)	–	–
Dissolution	–	–	–
Integration	Christian burial at church	Christian burial at church	Christian burial at church

Table 2: Motif type 4 – revenants foreshadowing the Severe Death of other characters

Work	<i>Víga-Glúms saga</i>	<i>Fóstbræðra saga</i>	<i>Laxdæla saga</i>
Revenants	unnamed dead people	Þorgeirr Hávarsson and his men	Þórkell
Characteristics	N/A	unsocial	N/A
Severe Death (cause)	N/A	slain in battle	drowning
Social Death (cause)	N/A	no	no
Activity	individual appearance	individual appearance	individual appearance
Funeral before return (type)	N/A	yes	no
Immobilization	–	–	–
Dissolution	–	–	–
Integration	–	–	–

sodes all feature unsocial and sometimes also heathen characters who can be interpreted as having suffered Social Death because of these vices, since they are also negatively connoted as unpopular by the narrator and/or other characters. These negative characters turn into malevolent revenants upon their death, and their dissolution promotes moral or Christian values, which can be considered to be their common narrative function.

Table 3: Motif type 2 – unsocial and sometimes also heathen characters turning into malevolent revenants whose dissolution promotes moral, especially Christian values

Work	<i>Eiríks saga rauða</i>	<i>Laxdæla saga</i>	<i>Flóamanna saga</i>	<i>Eyrbyggja saga</i>
Revenants	Garðarr	Hrappr	Jósteinn and his group	Þórólfr bægifótr
Characteristics	heathen, unsocial	unsocial	heathen, unsocial	unsocial
Severe Death (cause)	disease	no	disease, madness	sudden death
Social Death (cause)	unsocial	unsocial	heathen, unsocial	unsocial
Activity	<i>Nachziehen</i>	haunting and <i>Nachziehen</i>	haunting and <i>Nachziehen</i>	haunting and <i>Nachziehen</i>
Funeral before return (type)	no	yes (doorway)	no	yes (cairn)
Immobilization	–	translation to marginal area (cairn)	–	translation to marginal, fenced area
Dissolution	cremation	cremation; ashes spread at sea	cremation	cremation
Integration	–	–	–	–

Motif type 3 contains revenants usually associated by Old Norse scholarship with a saga genre not included in this study, the *Fornaldarsögur*. These sagas follow a heroic narrative pattern, featuring valiant fighters facing many deadly adventures. One type of adventure is to defeat a revenant—much like defeating a giant, troll, or witch—which is another common kind of adventure in the sagas belonging to this genre. The main difference is that giants and trolls are usually encountered in the wilderness by chance, while revenants are a known and constant threat to a settlement the hero enters—in some way resembling the configuration of Grendel in *Beowulf*.

This motif type, however, has a sub-type 3b, which has the function of both a test of heroism and promoting moral, especially Christian values—thus being some kind of mixture between motif types 2 and 3. Making clear categorical cuts between types of any kind in literary studies is often next to impossible or not clarifying anything further, so a closer look on the interaction of motif types 2 and 3 promises further insights.

Two out of the three episodes that form motif type 3b are taken from *Grettis saga*, which is commonly considered to belong to the *Sagas of the Icelanders* genre, but contains features known from the *Fornaldarsögur*. In accordance

Table 4: Motif type 3a – revenants whose exorcisms function as tests of heroism or political power of a protagonist (not coupled with promoting moral, especially Christian values)

Work	<i>Flóamanna s.</i>	<i>Færeyinga s.</i>	<i>Harðar s. ok Holmverjar</i>	<i>Hávarðar s. Ísfirðings</i>	<i>Flóamanna s.</i>
Revenants	Björn's father	Sigurðr Þorláksson, Þórðr lági, Gautr rauði	Sóti	Þormóðr	Gyða
Characteristics	N/A	unsocial	unsocial (troll)	unsocial	witch
Severe Death (cause)	no	believed to have drowned	no	no	no
Social Death (cause)	N/A	<i>exile</i>	unsocial	unsocial	witchcraft
Activity	haunting	haunting	haunting	haunting	haunting
Funeral before return (type)	yes (grave mound)	no	yes (burial mound)	yes	no
Immobilization	beheading	–	–	breaking spine	–
Dissolution	–	–	exorcized with candlelight	sunk at sea	cremation
Integration	–	amnesty	–	–	–
Narrative function	test of heroism (Þorgils)	test of political power (Þrándr)	test of heroism (Hǫrðr)	test of heroism (Óláfr)	test of heroism Þorgils

with this genre mix, these episodes very clearly show the combination of motif type 2, which is usually not found in *Fornaldarsögur*, and motif type 3, which—as stated above—is considered to be typical of *Fornaldarsögur*.

The haunting at Fróðá (Þoroddr, Þórir viðleggr, Þórðr kausi, Þorgríma galdrakinn, a *sauðamaðr*) in *Eyrbyggja saga* is ended by Kjartan with the advice of the famous Snorri goði. The narrative function of this episode is to prove the positive characteristics of young Kjartan. The main reason for these hauntings is the ignored dying wish of Christian Þorgunna, who is a benevolent revenant, as discussed above. Here, the motif types 1, 2, and 3 are intertwined, as the appearance of a *fylgja*-like seal's head in the hearth fire foreshadows the Severe Death of some of the characters who then return as revenants (cf. motif type 4). This might be a reason why the revenants in *Eyrbyggja saga* receive such thorough scholarly attention.

Comparing the motif types discussed above, some general patterns can be observed. Characters dying a Severe Death function as ghost-like figures foreshadowing the Severe Death of another character (type 4). If they are characterized positively, they expect only a Christian burial and ask the living for this rite

Table 5: Motif type 3b – revenants whose exorcisms function as tests of heroism or political power of a protagonist (coupled with promoting moral or especially Christian values)

Work	<i>Eyrbyggja saga</i>	<i>Grettis saga</i>	<i>Grettis saga</i>
Revenants	Póroddr, Þórir viðleggr, Þórðr kausi, Þorgríma galdrakinn, a <i>sauðamaðr</i>	Glámr	Kárr inn gamli
Characteristics	N/A	heathen, unsocial	unsocial (greedy)
Severe Death (cause)	disease, madness, drowning	disappears in a storm	no
Social Death (cause)	no	heathen, unsocial	unsocial
Activity	haunting and <i>Nachziehen</i>	haunting and <i>Nachziehen</i>	haunting
Funeral before return (type)	no	yes (cairn)	yes (burial mound)
Immobilization	–	beheading, head put between legs	beheading, head put to buttocks
Dissolution	–	cremation; ashes buried in marginal area	–
Integration	Christian burial at church; door court	–	–
Narrative function	promote Christian values; test of heroism (Kjartan)	promote Christian values; test of heroism (Grettir)	promote moral values; test of heroism (Grettir)

(type 1). Characters dying a Social Death turn into malevolent revenants. If there is a Christian discourse included in the narrative, they need to be cremated or beheaded in order to stop their haunting and *Nachziehen* (type 2 and the *Grettis saga* instances of 3b). If the episode's narrative function consists solely of testing a protagonist's virtues, they do not function as *Nachzieher* and their haunting is ended in various ways (3a and the *Eyrbyggja saga* instance of 3b).

In addition to these findings, however, it is striking that there are only a few female characters among the revenants, and we believe that this is a field for fruitful further research. One reason for this might be that women rarely function as legal subjects, apart from Þorgunna with her bequest in *Eyrbyggja saga*, in which she is a legal subject. Þorgunna wishes on her deathbed that part of her bequest be burned. Þorgríma galdrakinn prevents her husband from fulfilling Þorgunna's dying wish, which is one of the reasons stated by Hasenfratz for causing the dead to return: having their dying wishes unfulfilled. Eventually, Þorgríma galdrakinn and her husband die and (like Þorgunna) return as revenants, linking the second female character to the legal issue of inheritance, in which the first one got relevant.

Table 6: Comparison of the main motif types

Type	1	2 (part of 3b)	3a (part of 3b)	4
Characteristics	positive	negative	negative	usually N/A
Severe Death (cause)	yes	often	mostly not	usually yes
Social Death (cause)	no	unsocial (heathen)	mostly unsocial	usually no
Activity	haunting	haunting and <i>Nachziehen</i>	haunting	individual appearance
Funeral before return (type)	no	yes	yes	varies
Immobilization	(individual instance)	(translation to marginal area)	one out	–
Dissolution	–	Cremation	of	–
Integration	Christian burial at church	–	the three	–
Narrative function	promote Chri- stian rites	promote moral (Chri- stian) values	test of heroism	foreshadowing

The third female character in the discussed corpus, Gyða from *Flóamanna saga*, is a witch and fits well into the theme of the problematic conversion to Christianity entailing much protest of the heathen god Þórr, while also complying to Hasenfratz's theory, in which persons living outside of societal norms (e.g., Icelandic witches after the formal conversion of Iceland) return as revenants after their death.

Revenants in Old Norse literature are not very homogenous in their appearance and function, but some major patterns could be shown here. Individual features of revenants comply well with the model put forward by Hasenfratz. Our analysis could show that some episodes convolute several characteristics of Hasenfratz's model. In those episodes, both helpful Christian and destructive pagan revenants haunt the living. It was possible to highlight the integrative measures taken by characters to end the haunting of revenants, e.g., Christian burials of popular characters that turned into revenants. This analysis also leads to a better understanding of the ideological discourses negotiated in revenant episodes, which Bödl and Sayers highlighted for individual revenant episodes, thus expanding our understanding of the literary function of revenants in saga literature.

Nurit Golan (Tel Aviv University, Israel)

The North Portal of the Freiburg im Breisgau Minster: Cosmological Imagery as Funerary Art

The north portal of the Gothic choir of “Our Beloved Lady” (Unserer Lieben Frau) of the Parish Church of Freiburg im Breisgau, though modest in size, is heavily adorned with sculpted imagery. The portal features a double tympana, the inner one depicting the Crucifixion, and the outer one a Creation Cycle, with an unusual emphasis on the Creation of the Cosmos¹ (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1

1 A Creation Cycle comprises a number of images which follow the description of the six days of creation according to the first three chapters of Genesis, the *Hexaemeron*. This particular genre should not be confused with another type representing the creation, which is the “Roman Type.” This latter type is depicted in one single image and it derives from different literary sources. See Jan van der-Meulen, “Schöpfung, Schöpfer,” *Lexikon der Christlichen Ikonographie*, ed. Engelbert Kirschbaum, vol. 3 (1968), 99–110; Jan van der Meulen and Nancy Waterman Price, *The West Portals of Chartres Cathedral: The Iconology of the Creation* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1981), 35–60.

This abundance of imagery has attracted the attention of art historians, raising the question of for whose eyes was such an investment intended. That one of the reliefs depicts the created Cosmos as composed of spheres and orbs, an iconography hitherto found mainly in astronomical manuscripts, has added another dimension to this question. Art historians such as Thomas Flum have consequently suggested that the portal was not viewed by the general public but only by a small group of the learned elite. Flum and others have claimed that the north portal was used only by the clerics who had a small cemetery nearby,² and that it was otherwise completely hidden behind the twelfth-century Andreaskapelle (Chapel of St. Andrew) situated in front of it. Assaf Pinkus saw in the two tympana of the north portal, the internal and the external, together with the single tympanum of the south portal, an intricate typological program in the style of the *Bibles moralisées* and the *Speculum humanae salvationis*.³ This, he considered, was additional proof that only a small and exclusive group of educated clerics were the intended viewers of these portals.⁴ The research to-date, however, provides no explanation that might justify the significant and unusual effort invested in decorating the north portal, both externally and internally. That significant effort and cost went into creating such a monument may suggest that a much larger audience was expected. Was this portal really hidden from the public gaze?

2 Flum summarized the current state of research. See Thomas Flum, *Der Spätgotische Chor des Freiburger Münster, Baugeschichte und Baugestalt*. Neue Forschungen zur Deutschen Kunst, V (Berlin: Deutscher Verlag für Kunstwissenschaft, 2001), 71–77; see also Ditmar Lüdke, “Ober-rhein: Freiburg i. Breisgau: nördliches Chorortal,” *Die Parler und der schöne Stil 1350–1400. Europäische Kunst unter den Luxemburgern. Ein Handbuch zur Ausstellung des Schnütgen-Museums in der Kunsthalle Köln*, vol. 1 (Cologne: Museen der Stadt Köln, 1978): 298–99; Assaf Pinkus, *Patrons and Narratives of the Parler School: The Marian Tympana, 1350–1400* (Munich and Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2009), 217–18. The graveyard/or cemetery and chapel existed since the twelfth century and were finally demolished in the seventeenth century; see Frank Löbbecke, “Burg, Markt, Stadt – die vorstädtische Entwicklung Freiburgs,” *Das Freiburger Münster*, ed. Rüdiger Becksmann, Hans Josef Böker, and Anne-Christine Brehm (Regensburg: Schnell and Steiner, 2011), 27–32.

3 Pinkus, *Patrons and Narratives of the Parler School* (see note 2), 218–21; Pinkus, “Das Schöpfungsportal: Kunst und Lehre im mittelalterlichen Freiburg,” *Münsterblatt* 13 (2006): 4–12.

4 Pinkus’s interpretation enlightens many questions concerning the south portal of the choir, which are not within the scope of this paper. See his “Das Schöpfungsportal”, 9–10. My contention is that the portals could appeal to many different addressees, being suggestive with multi-layered meanings.

The Cemetery and St. Andrew's Chapel

Based on recent archeological research, I suggest that the audience of the portal was not limited to a small group of clergy, but included all the town's burghers, both secular and clerical. The graveyard was not small at all. It surrounded the church on all sides and was quite large. As is the case with many parish churches, it served the entire parish.⁵ In the fourteenth century it grew extensively, probably as a consequence of the plague of 1348.⁶ When we examine more closely the location of the marking on the pavement indicating the exact location of the walls of the St. Andrew chapel, demolished in the eighteenth century, however, it becomes clear that the chapel did not hide any part of the north portal at all (Fig. 2). If the chapel was used for burial ceremonies for the deceased, as noted by earlier research, this might indicate that the north portal was used both by lay members of the community and by clerics.⁷ The cemetery was surrounded by a wall, which indicates that in order to see any of the portals of the church, including the main prominent and highly decorated west portal, one had to enter through the cemetery gate.⁸

My contention is that the portal could indeed have been seen by all the burghers who used this graveyard, and not only by an exclusively learned and small group of clerics. This new possibility raises a number of questions that have hitherto not been asked: Why are there scientific ideas presented on a church portal, and how are they connected to the Book of Genesis? Whose decision was it to select this particular topic; and last but not least, did the audience possess the necessary scientific literacy in order to understand what they were looking at?

5 As to the location of the north portal in relation to the chapel and the changes that the cemetery has gone through from the twelfth to the eighteenth centuries, see Löbbecke, "Burg, Markt," *Das Freiburger Münster* (see note 2), 28–29; On the use of cemeteries located around parish churches, see Julia Barrow, "Urban Cemetery Location in the High Middle Age," *Death in Towns, Urban Responses to the Dying and the Dead, 100–1600*, ed. Steven R. Basset (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1992), 78–100; Julian Gardner, *The Tomb and the Tiara: Curial Tomb Sculptures in Rome and Avignon in the Late Middle Age*. Clarendon Studies in the History of Art (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 5–6.

6 Rosemary Horrox, *The Black Death*. Manchester Medieval Sources (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994).

7 Löbbecke, "Burg, Markt" (see note 2), 28–29, note the illustrated maps, especially nos. 1 and 2, and also the drawing on page 32.

8 This means that all the portals of the church, including the large and elaborate western one, could have been seen only by entering the gate in the wall that was demolished only in the eighteenth century.



Fig. 2

In this article I seek the answers to these questions in three directions: in the iconography and significance of the images; in the history of the town and its parish church; and in the specific intellectual development of the region of the upper-Rhine. This will shed light on the unusual connection of the scientific imagery with the cemetery and death.

The Creation of the Cosmos and the Question of its Scientific Depiction⁹

The Creation of the Cosmos was seldom featured in monumental sculptures on public display in Latin Europe during the Middle Ages. Between the fifth and fif-

⁹ I use the terms “natural philosophy” and “science” interchangeably. In this I follow Grant. See Edward Grant, “Science and Theology in the Middle Ages,” *God and Nature: Historical Essays on the Encounter between Christianity and Science*, ed. David Lindberg and Roland Numbers (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986), 49–75; here 70: “Although there are significant differences between modern *science* and the medieval term *natural philosophy*, the two will be used here interchangeably. In practical terms, natural philosophy (or “natural science” as it was occasionally called) was generally identified with Aristotle’s “natural books” (*libri naturales*), which treated themes in cosmology, physics, and matter theory. As one of the three major subdivisions of speculative philosophy natural philosophy was concerned exclusively

teenth centuries only sixteen sculpted Cosmological Creation cycles on public display are known.¹⁰ These cycles are distinct from the cycles depicting the Creation of Mankind, which is quite a common topic in ecclesiastical art.¹¹ Freiburg is one of a group of five out of those sixteen rare cosmological cycles. This group of five cycles appeared in south Germany, in the region of the Upper Rhine in the fourteenth century¹² (Fig. 3). Although there are some debates regarding the precise dates and the artists that produced these five extraordinary cosmological creation cycles, all these choirs and churches were built during the second half of the fourteenth century, by the Parler workshop, which was active in the region between Prague and Vienna until the last decade of the fourteenth century.¹³

The scarce appearance of the subject of cosmological creation in monumental public art stands in contrast to the abundance of this topic in illustrated manuscripts. A new interest in philosophy and science following the translation

with mobile bodies and their changes. Although natural philosophy was distinct from mathematics, sciences that used mathematics, such as optics and astronomy, but were also concerned with mobile bodies, could also fall under the consideration of natural philosophy.”

10 Zahlten studied 634 creation cycles appearing in all media. The number of these cycles appearing on public display is very small compared to their number in illustrated manuscripts, which amount to hundreds. I did not find any other cosmological sculpted cycle in addition to those he mentions. See Johannes Zahlten, *Creatio Mundi, Darstellungen der sechs Schöpfungstage und naturwissenschaftliches Weltbild im Mittelalter*. Stuttgarter Beiträge zur Geschichte und Politik, 13 (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1979), 218–22.

11 Following Rudolf I make a distinction between the presence of the first five days of creation which he termed the Cosmological Creation, and the rest of the story of creation, the Anthropological Creation. The Anthropological Creation is not the topic of this article. Rudolf claims that while creation illustrations in manuscripts appear only seven times in the eleventh-century and sixty-one times in the twelfth, there are 233 illustrations in the thirteenth century. Rudolf connects this to a new interest in the natural philosophy of pagan origin whose main works were translated into Latin during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. See Conrad Rudolf, “In the Beginning: Theories and Images of Creation in Northern Europe in the Twelfth Century,” *Art History* 22.1 (1999): 3–55; here 29.

12 The sculpted cosmological cycles of the Upper-Rhine comprise more than a third of the total of sculpted cosmological cycles in the Middle Ages! They appear, in addition to the one in Freiburg, also in Schwäbisch Gmünd, Strasburg, Thann, and Ulm. This unusual phenomenon raises many questions that have not yet been asked or answered by art historians.

13 Most of the debates are based on documents related to the architecture of this choir. Wolf Hart and Adam Ernst, *Das Freiburger Münster* (Freiburg i.Br.: Rombach, 1978); Thomas Flum, *Der spätgotische Chor des Freiburger Münster* (see note 2); Georg Schelbert, “Zu den Anfängen des gotischen Chores des Freiburger Münster, neue Beobachtungen an Sakristei und Alexanderkapelle,” *Architectura, Zeitschrift für der Baukunst* 26 (1996): 125–43.



Fig. 3

movement of the twelfth century¹⁴ gave rise to illustrations of scientific themes in manuscripts, both scientific and illustrated Bibles in particular in the Book of Genesis.¹⁵ It has been accepted by art historians that images portraying the cos-

14 The literature on the subject of the influence on Christianity of natural philosophy of Greek and Arabic origins as a result of the translation movement of the Twelfth-Century Renaissance is quite abundant. See, for instance, Charles H. Haskins, *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century* (1927; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1955), 93–126, 193–223, 278–367; Haskins, *Studies in the History of Medieval Science* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927); Marie-Thérèse D’Alverny, “Translations and Translators,” *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century*, ed. Robert Louis Benson, Giles Constable, Carol Dana Lanham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, Committee on Medieval Studies, 1982), 422–64; David C. Lindberg, *The Beginning of Western Science, the European Scientific Tradition in Philosophical, Religious and Institutional Context, 600 B.C. to A.D. 1450* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 183–240; Edward Grant, *Planets, Stars and Orbs, the Medieval Cosmos, 1200–1687* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 3–62; Loris Sturlese, *Philosophie im Mittelalter, von Boethius bis Cusanus* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2013), 46–54; Paola Zambelli, *The Speculum Astronomiae and Its Enigma, Astrology, Theology and Science in Albertus Magnus and his Contemporaries*, Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science, 135 (Dordrecht, Boston, and London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1992), 105–26.

15 Harry Bober, “An Illustrated Medieval School-Book of Bede’s ‘De natura rerum,’” *The Journal of the Walters Art Gallery*, 19/20 (1956/1957): 64–97; Harry Bober, “In Principio: Creation Be-

mic creation in medieval art, meaning the first four-five days described in *Genesis* 1.1–20, represent theories of natural philosophy as studied at the cathedral schools and universities.¹⁶ Nothing remotely similar can be detected in monumental public art, especially monumental sculptures.

Strong opposition was raised by the Church against the introduction of natural philosophy and cosmological theories into the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures. This opposition was expressed and made public by members of the Paris University. In the years 1210, 1215, 1231, and 1245 the teaching of Aristotle's natural philosophy and that of his commentator Averroes were prohibited at Paris University. In the year 1252 the Masters of the Liberal Arts had to swear an oath that they would not introduce scientific theories when discussing with their students any question concerning the Creation of the Cosmos or other matters of faith. Nonetheless, surprisingly, from 1255 onwards every student of the Liberal Arts had to master all of Aristotle's writings.¹⁷ It is thus clear that there was ongoing tension between the basic studies at the university, and the higher studies of theology.¹⁸

In the year 1277 Etienne Tempier, Bishop of Paris, pronounced as heretical 219 theses based on Aristotle and his commentator Averroes (1126–1198). Similar scientific ideas that were being taught regularly in the Liberal Arts were now sus-

fore Time," *Essays in Honor of Erwin Panofsky*, vol. 1, ed. Millard Meis. *De Artibus Opuscula*, XL (New York: New York University Press, 1961), 13–33.

16 Johan, Jakob, Tikkanen, "Die Genesismosaiken von S. Marco in Venedig und ihr Verhältnis zu den Miniaturen der Cottonbible nebst einer Untersuchung über die Ursprünge der mittelalterlichen Genesisdarstellung, besonders in der byzantinischen und italienischen Kunst," *Acta Societatis Scientiarum Fennicae* XVII (Helsingfors: Nabu Press, 1891), 205–358; Wilhelm Neuss, *Die katalanische Bibelillustration um die Wende des ersten Jahrtausends und die altspanische Buchmalerei: eine neue Quelle zur Geschichte des Auslebens der altchristlichen Kunst in Spanien und zur frühmittelalterlichen Stilgeschichte* (Bonn and Leipzig: Schröder, 1922); Pavel Springer, "Trinitatis-Creator-Annus: Beiträge zur mittelalterlichen Trinitätsikonographie," *Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch* 38 (Cologne: Wallraf-Richartz Museum, 1976): 17–45; Johannes Zahlten, *Creatio mundi* (see note 10); Gerhart B. Ladner, *God, Cosmos, and Humankind, the World of Early Christian Symbolism*, trans. Thomas Dunlap (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1992), 65–156.

17 Lynn Thorndike, *University Records and Life in the Middle Ages* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949), 22, 26, 30, 35, 39, 47, 48, 52, 64, 80, 85, 103.

18 One of the most severe and influential opponents of this mode of interpreting the Holy Scriptures was Bonaventura. See Ruedi Imbach, Bonaventura, *Collationes in Hexaemeron*, in *Hauptwerke der Philosophie: Mittelalter*, ed. Kurt Flasch (Stuttgart: Reclam Verlag, 1998), 270–91.

pected of being heretical.¹⁹ Concurrently, natural philosophy and astronomy continued to be part of the curriculum and books were written for their teaching, such as *De sphaera mundi* (1230) by Johannes Sacrobosco (1195–1256), which described the cosmos similarly to Ptolemy in his *Almagest*,²⁰ and which continued to be used as a textbook in virtually all of the European universities for over 400 years.²¹ The tension between the two groups, the supporters of the use of natural philosophy in commentary on the Holy Scriptures in general and Genesis in particular, and those who were against it, could be the reason for the scarcity of this topic in public art. At the same time it could also explain the abundance of cosmological illustrations in manuscripts, attesting to a genuine interest in the subject. This presents the Freiburg's portal as an even greater enigma.²²

19 Pierre Duhem, *Medieval Cosmology, Theories of Infinity, Place, Time, Void and the Plurality of Worlds*, trans. and ed. Roger Ariew (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1985), 139–268, 387–92; Loris Sturlese, *Philosophie im Mittelalter* (see note 14), 68; Edward Grant, “Science and Theology in the Middle Ages,” *God and Nature* (see note 9), 49–75; Edward Grant, *Science and Religion, 400 BC to AD 1550: From Aristotle to Copernicus* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 180–85; David Lindberg, *The Beginning of Western Science* (see note 14), 183–244; Grant, *Planets Stars and Orbs* (see note 14), 36–62; David C. Lindberg, “The Medieval Church Encounters the Classical Tradition: Saint Augustine, Roger Bacon, and the Handmaiden Metaphor,” *When Science and Christianity Meet*, ed. David C. Lindberg and Roland L. Numbers (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2003), 10–32; here 12–19; John Marenbon, *Medieval Philosophy, an Historical and Philosophical Introduction* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 205–70; Albert der Grosse, *Über die fünfzehn Streitfragen, Lateinisch-Deutsch*, trans. Henryk Anzulewicz, ed. Henryk Anzulewicz and Norbert Winkler (Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 2010), 7–40; Yossef Schwartz, “Divine Space and the Space of the Divine: On the Scholastic Rejection of Arab Cosmology,” *Représentations et conceptions de l'espace dans la culture médiévale, Colloque Fribourgeois 2009*, ed. Tiziana Suarez-Nani and Martin Rohde (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2011), 89–120; Richard Cross, “The Condemnation of 1277 and Henry of Ghent on Angelic Location,” *Angels in Medieval Philosophical Inquiry, Their Function and Significance*, ed. Isabel Iribarren and Martin Lenz. Ashgate Studies in Medieval Philosophy (Aldershot: Burlington, VT, Ashgate, 2008), 73–88; Henrik Wels, “Late Medieval Debates on the Location of Angels After the Condemnation of 1277,” *Angels in Medieval Philosophical Inquiry*, 113–27; Etienne Gilson, *Reason and Revelation in the Middle Ages* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1963).

20 The *Almagest* is a second-century mathematical and astronomical treatise on the motions of the stars in a geocentric system. It was written by Ptolemy (83–161), a Greek philosopher, and was the most influential astronomical work in medieval Europe for over thousand years.

21 Lynn Thorndike, *The Sphere of Sacrobosco and its Commentators* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949); Olaf Pedersen, “In Quest of Sacrobosco,” *Journal for the History of Astronomy* 16 (1985): 175–221; John Louis Emile Dreyer, *A History of Astronomy from Thales to Kepler* (New York: Dover Publications with Cambridge University Press, 1953), 207–39; 233.

22 Schäfer was the first to mention the “atmosphere of natural philosophy” that can be noticed in this portal. See Karl Schäfer, “Die Welterschöpfungsbilder am Chorportal des Freiburger

The Freiburg Church—a History

The parish church of Freiburg im Breisgau was founded in 1146 by the von Zähringen family, the lords of the town, but the Gothic choir, and its north portal were built more than two hundred years later and were initiated and wholly financed by the citizens of Freiburg.²³ Its cornerstone was laid in 1354, six years after the first and worst outbreak of the plague.²⁴ It was built by the Parler workshop.²⁵ In the year 1375 the work stopped because of shortage of funds, and was

Münsters,” *Schau-ins-Land* 26 (1899): 11–24; Wolfgang Schneider, “Ein Modell des Kosmos am Freiburger Münster,” *Freiburger Diözesan-Archiv* 125 (2005): 241–48.

23 The involvement of the city burghers in this choir seems to have been total. They signed the contract with the architect, they donated large sums of money as well as goods, and they were administratively responsible for the workshop, the *fabrica*. See Thomas Flum, *Der spätgotische Chor des Freiburger Münsters* (see note 2); Löbbecke, “Burg, Markt, Stadt” (see note 2), 27–32.

24 “*Uon.gottes.geburt.m.ccc,Und.Li.ii.ia.aran.vnserfro,Wen.abent.in.derusten,Leit.man.den.ersten.stein,An.disen.kor,*” meaning: “in the year 1354 on the eve of Our Lady’s fast the cornerstone of this choir was laid.” See Thomas Flum, *Der spätgotische Chor des Freiburger Münster* (see note 2), 15.

25 Since the contract between the municipality and Johann Parler dates from 1359, while the cornerstone was laid, according to an inscription on the wall, in 1354, this has given rise to speculations about the identity of the master who planned the choir: was it planned by an anonymous architect, or by Johann Parler? This debate is not of our concern here, however, since I maintain that no information about architecture can be taken at face value regarding the sculptural enterprise of many churches in the Middle Ages, unless it is mentioned as such in documentation. Was Parler involved from the beginning? Or did he carry out architectural plans designed by some unknown architect? This debate among art historians has lasted over a hundred years and is not of interest to this discussion. I refer to the main contributors briefly. See Hans Reinhold, *Der Chor des Münsters zu Freiburg i. Br. und die Baukunst der Parlerfamilie*. Studien zur deutschen Kunstgeschichte, 263 (Straßburg: J. H. E. Heitz, 1929), 38; Hans Reinhardt, “Johannes von Gmünd, Baumeister an den Münstern von Basel und Freiburg, und sein Sohn Michael von Freiburg, Werkmeister am Strassburger Münster,” *Zeitschrift für Schweizerische Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte* 3 (1941): 137–52; here 138; Ernst Adam, “Oberrhein: Freiburg i. Breisgau, Chor,” *Die Parler und der schöne Stil* (see note 2): 295–97; here 296; Flum conveniently summarizes all the key arguments. According to his convincing insight, Johann Parler was the responsible master right from the beginning of the work. The fact that a cornerstone was laid at a certain time, does not necessarily mean that this is when the construction actually started. See Thomas Flum, “Der Freiburger Münsterchor und die Parler,” *Parlerbauten: Architektur, Skulptur, Restaurierung. Internationales Parler-Symposium, Schwäbisch Gmünd, 17–19 Juli 2001*, ed. Richard Strobel, Annette Siefert together with Klaus Jürgen Hermann. Arbeitsheft, Landesdenkmalamt Baden-Württemberg, 13 (Stuttgart: Konrad Theiss, 2004), 77–78. Pinkus sees in the data that led to these speculations the proof for his theory regarding the way how the Parler workshops functioned: namely, a few groups of workers engaged in different enterprises with one or more masters who traveled from one workshop to another. See Assaf Pinkus

renewed only a hundred years later with the aid of a substantial donation from the Pope.

Art historians now concur, after much debate, that the architect of the choir was Johann Parler of Gmünd, although his contract with the *Rat* (city council) was signed only in 1359. As far as the north portal is concerned, it is accepted that Johann Parler constructed it, but was he, as the *Werkmeister* (head of the workshop) in charge, also responsible for all its sculptures? Wilhelm Vöge was the first to show that the five upper reliefs in the archivolt of the north portal are very different stylistically from the others, and he claimed that they were sculpted at the beginning of the fourteenth century by an artist from Strasbourg, while the other reliefs are dated to the Parler enterprise, 1354/9–1375 (Fig. 4).²⁶

Since apart from two heads in the tympani of the choir, the portal has not undergone any change over time, we can accept that this is how it was originally designed and intended. I maintain that regardless of whether the sculptures were the product of a single master or more than one, created in a single phase or several, the portal, when the final program was agreed upon and constructed, presents a coherent message, the significance of which was original for the time. The north portal of the choir thus displays a unique combination of both theological and natural philosophical ideas, presented in an innovative artistic way.

Patrons and Narratives of the Parler School, The Marian Tympana, 1350–1400. Kunstwissenschaftliche Studien, 151 (Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2009), 19–32.

26 Vöge's interpretation is of great importance since he was the first to consider these five reliefs as a group. He did not look into a reason for the creation of such a group from any other aspect, but was seeking to identify and to date the work. He sought for answers in presumed stylistic influence. I intend to show that they cohere as a group also according to the cosmological theory and ideas that they depict, being original and innovative in that respect no less than from the iconographical point of view. See Wilhelm Vöge, "Zum Nordportal des Freiburger Münsterchor," *Freiburger Münsterblätter* 11 (1915): 1–9, reprinted in *Bildhauer des Mittelalters: Gesammelte Studien von Wilhelm Vöge* (Berlin: Verlag Gebr. Mann, 1958), 229–40; Guido Linke, "Die Skulpturen der Chorportale," *Das Freiburger Münster* (see note 2): 205–10; 206. Linke accepts Vöge's hypothesis, but wonders about the place these five reliefs were intended for if made between 1300–1310, so many years before the planning of the Gothic choir; King mentions the fact that the five reliefs of the cosmological creation are longer than the other reliefs and were cut from a different stone in a different curving method. His conclusion is that they are actually *spolia*. See Stefan King, "Das Schöpfungsportal des Freiburger Münster, Die Verwendung älterer Skulpturen und deren Folgen," *Vom Schicksal der Dinge: Spolie, Wiederverwendung, Recycling. Tagung in Brandenburg an der Havel, 13 bis 14 Juni 2013*, ed. Ulrich Klein and Andreas Diener. Mitteilungen der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Archäologie des Mittelalters und der Neuzeit, 26 (Paderborn: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Archäologie des Mittelalters und der Neuzeit, 2014), 73–82.

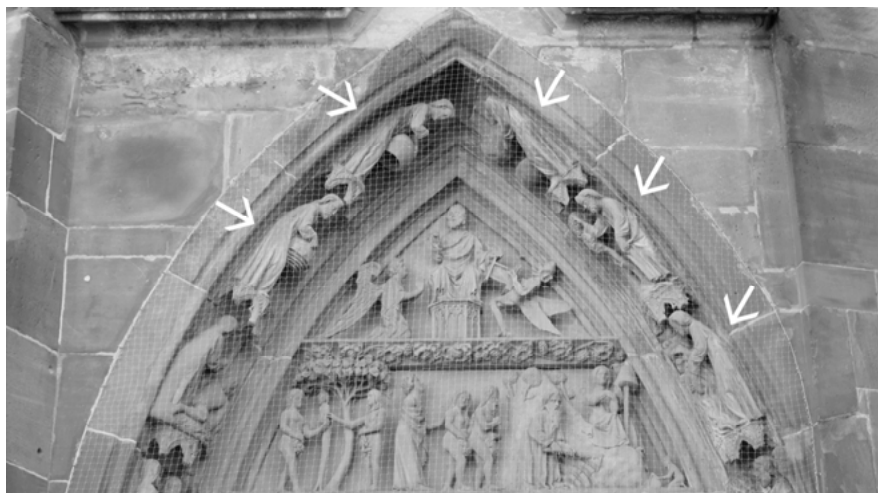


Fig. 4

Iconography and Significance

The reliefs of this portal are arranged in such a way that it forces the spectators' gaze to move from one side of the tympanum to the other (Fig. 1). In order to obtain a full picture of this unique arrangement, I shall briefly present the program of the outer tympanum:

The first register of the tympanum depicts the Creator seated with an angel kneeling in a gesture of devotion to his right, and to his left another angel, Lucifer, is being driven away, holding the throne he had tried to set above God. This is understood as the separation of light from darkness, good from evil.²⁷ The sec-

²⁷ Augustinus, Saint, Bishop of Hippo, *Confessions, Basic Writings of Saint Augustine*, Book 12/9, ed. W. J. Oates, vol. 1 (New York: Random House, 2006), 204–27; *City of God*, book 11 Chapter 9, trans. Marcus Dods, ed. Kevin Knight, www.newadvent.org (last accessed on Sept. 17, 2014); “For when God said, Let there be light, and there was light, if we are justified in understanding in this light the creation of the angels, then certainly they were created partakers of the eternal light which is the unchangeable Wisdom of God, by which all things were made, and whom we call the only-begotten Son of God, so that they, being illumined by the Light that created them, might themselves become light and be called Day, in participation of that unchangeable Light and Day which is the Word of God, by whom both themselves and all else were made. The true Light, which lights every man that comes into the world, John 1:9—this Light lights also every pure angel, that he may be light not in himself, but in God; from whom if an angel turn away, he becomes impure, as are all those who are called unclean spirits, and are no longer light

ond register features the Original Sin and its outcome: the First Couple is being expelled from Paradise and now has to work. Noticeably, Eve is clothed in the high-fashion of the upper bourgeoisie of the time.²⁸ The theme of sin and punishment creates an analogy between the two registers.²⁹

What really strikes one as unique and original in this portal, however, is the unusual arrangement of the sequence of the Days of Creation on the archivolt that surrounds the tympanum. This arrangement requires an exceptional way of reading. If we are to read this program in the sequence of the Six Days of Creation as described in Genesis, we need to do so in a spatial zigzag, a very original way, first noted by Weis.³⁰ This is the *boustrophedon*, a special form of reading a text. When used in art, the boustrophedon creates intricate meanings, as it does here.³¹ Pinkus stated that the zigzag stops with God's Rest on the seventh day. He saw this obstacle the trigger for the viewer to seek the typological connections between the outer and the inner tympana, in the style of *Speculum humanae salvationis* or of the *Bibles Moralisées*.³² I see it otherwise, however, since the appearance of the Creator's Rest in this very location, after the creation of Adam and before the continuation of the story, meaning the creation of Eve and the Original Sin, is actually a conventional way of telling the story of the Anthro-

in the Lord, but darkness in themselves, being deprived of the participation of Light eternal." Angels had an important role in medieval culture, both in mysticism and no less so in medieval astronomy. They were a topic in which theology and science met. See David Keck, *Angels and Angelology in the Middle Ages* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 16; Isabel Iribarren and Martin Lenz, "The Role of Angels in Medieval Philosophical Inquiry," *Angels in Medieval Philosophical Inquiry* (see note 19), 1–14; Tiziana Suarez-Nani, *Les anges et la philosophie* (Paris: Librairie philosophique J. Vrin, 2002).

28 Erika Thiel, *Geschichte des Kostüms: die europäische Mode von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart* (1905–1923; Berlin: Henschelverlag Kunst und Gesellschaft, 1968), 203.

29 While the sin of the rebellious angel could be understood as the reason for the creation of Man, the sin of Man can be understood as the reason that led to what is portrayed on the inner tympanum, the Passion and the Crucifixion.

30 Adolf Weis, "Das Freiburger Schöpfungportal und das Musterbuch von Strassburg," *Das Münster*. 78.5 (1952): 181–93; This idea was elaborated by Pinkus, see his article "Das Schöpfungportal: Kunst und Lehre im mittelalterlichen Freiburg" (see note 3), 9–10; Pinkus, *Patrons and Narratives* (see note 2), 219.

31 "Boustrophedon": writing from right to left and alternatively from left to right as done by an ox when plowing a field. This has been used in art as well. See Florens Deuchler, "Le sens de la lecture, à propos du boustrophedon," *Études d'art medieval offerts à Louis Grodecki*, ed. Sumner McKnight Crosby (Paris: Ophrys, 1981), 251–58; Marilyn Aronberg-Lavin, *The Places of Narratives: Mural Decoration in Italian Churches* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

32 Pinkus, "Das Schöpfungportal" (see note 3), 9–10; Pinkus, *Patrons and Narratives* (see note 2), 218–20.

logical Creation iconographically and textually.³³ There are two Creation stories in Genesis, the first of which elaborates upon the Creation of the Cosmos and is brief about the Creation of Mankind: chapter 1, 27 “male and female created them;” while the second one, in chapters 2 and 3, elaborates upon the Anthropological Creation and is brief about the cosmological one. God’s Rest is in between both in Chapter 2/1. The way the portal of Freiburg combines these two stories is not unique: being found, for example, on the nave mosaics of Capella Palatina in Palermo, Sicily, as well as on the nave mosaics of the Cathedral of Monreale, Sicily, both from the twelfth century.³⁴ In Freiburg, however, it serves a a different purpose, worthy of comment (Fig. 5).



Fig. 5

Accordingly, the cycle starts on the right with the Creator juggling two globes. This has been interpreted by Weis as the creation of Light, the “*Fiat lux*” and its separation from Darkness, or as the separation between Earth and Heaven,

³³ The juxtaposition of the tympana creates a deep eschatological meaning without the need for any other explanation. The typological reading is conventional and it seems to me that the deciphering of the program as typological does not need any trigger besides the juxtaposition. The Sin and the Redemption are thus connected in a causal way and are a suitable theme for a portal that led to a cemetery.

³⁴ Otto Demus, *The Mosaics of Norman Sicily* (1949; New York: Hacker Art Books, 1988), 40–42, 121–22.

both of which belong to the first day of Creation.³⁵ The first relief on the left, with the Creator holding an empty bell, was considered to be the creation of the firmament (Fig. 6). Moving back to the right we see the creation of the Plants on the third day; and left again, where we see the Creator with an object in a bell shape in which eight spheres are discernable, in the midst of which the earth is portrayed as a globe. This relief has been considered by earlier studies to be the description of the creation of the luminaries on the fourth day (Fig. 7). On the fifth day, depicted on the right, the fish and birds are being created, and on the left is the sixth day, with the creation of Man. According to Genesis, and probably also influenced by Byzantine art, it then moves to the right again, where God is resting on the seventh day (Fig. 8). Only then does it go back to the animation of Adam, downward to the creation of Eve, and finally back to the right, to the relief that closes the cycle with the nuptials of Adam and Eve (Fig. 9). This relief faces those entering the choir almost at eye level. The boustrophedon requires the viewer pass to look back and forth across the tympanum eight times, a fact that needs an explanation (Fig. 5).³⁶

Looking at those five reliefs that have been examined stylistically as a group in previous research, and given a common dating and craftsmanship but not any specific interpretation, we can see here the creation of the Four Elements³⁷; the Creation of Light which is the creation of Fire (Fig. 10); the Creation of the Plants which is the creation of Earth (Fig. 11); the Creation of Fish which is the creation of Water; and the Creation of Birds which is the creation of Air (Fig. 12). This way of depicting the Four Elements, using symbolic representations, was neither new nor unique. The theologian Thierry of Chartres (d. ca. 1150), following Augustine, claimed that the four elements were created during the first days of Creation, just before the creation of the luminaries on the fourth day, meaning before Time.³⁸

35 Marie-Thérèse D'Alverny, *Le Cosmos Symbolique du XIIe Siècle*, *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Âge*, vol. XX (Paris: Librairie J. Vrin, 1953); D'Alverny, "Les anges et les jours," *Cahiers Archéologiques* IX (1957): 271–82.

36 See Weis, "Das Freiburger Schöpfungsportal und das Musterbuch von Strassburg" (see note 30), 188–90; Pinkus, "Das Schöpfungsportal" (see note 3), 14–12.

37 Craig Martin, "Elements and Qualities," *Medieval Science, Technology and Medicine: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Thomas Glick, Steven J. Livesey, and Faith Wallis (New York: Psychology Press, 2005), 157–59; Albert the Great, *On the Causes of the Properties of the Elements, Liber de causis proprietatum elementorum*, trans. Irven M. Resnick. *Medieval Philosophical Texts in Translation* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2010); *Medical Thought from Antiquity to the Middle Ages*, ed. Mirko Drazen Grmek, trans. A. Shugaar (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).

38 Peter Dronke, "Thierry of Chartres," *A History of Western Philosophy*, ed. Peter Dronke (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 358–85; Thierry de Chartres, "De sex dierum operi-



Fig. 6



Fig. 7

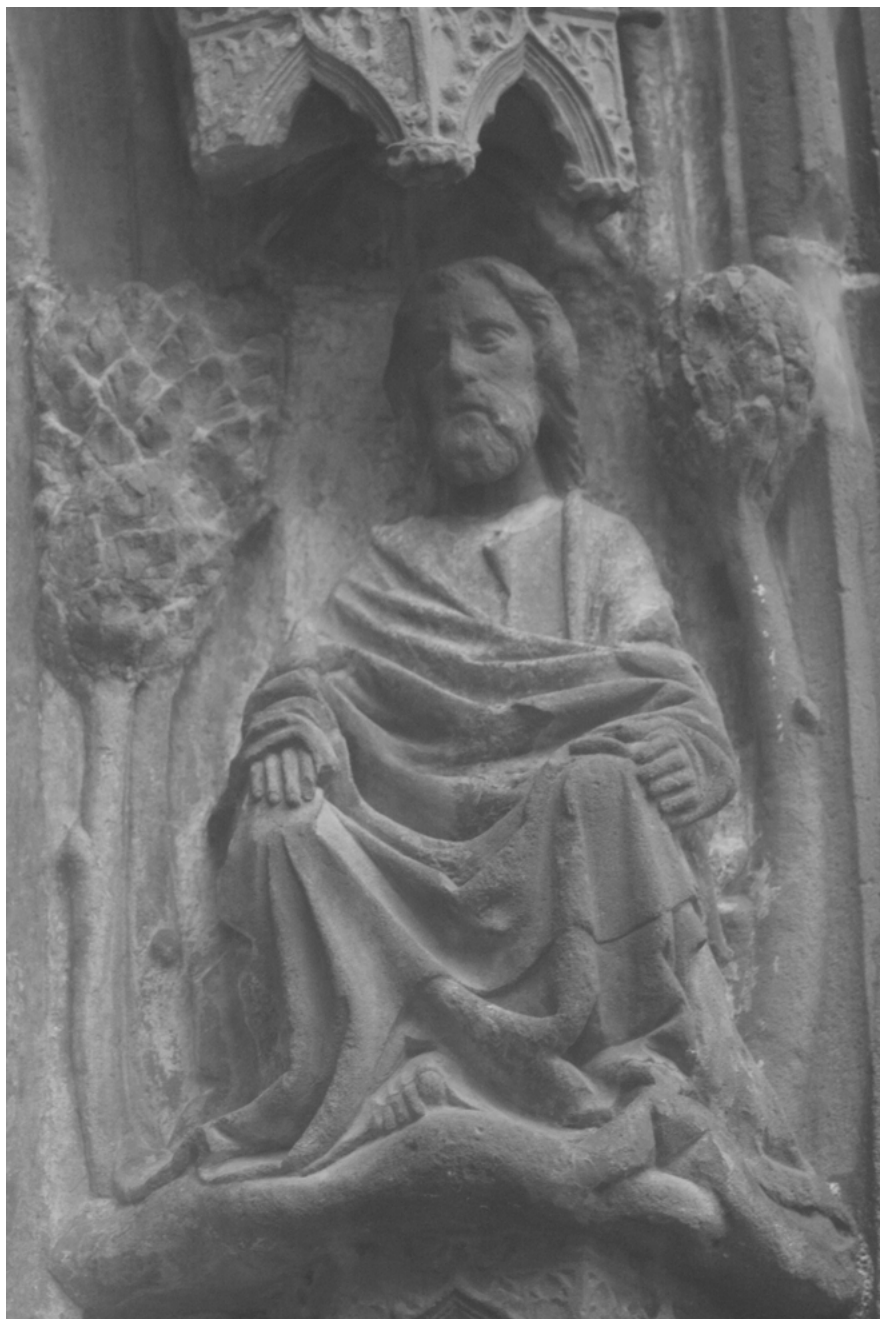


Fig. 8



Fig. 9

Harry Bober has shown how the four elements were depicted in many ways in Christian art, symbolized by animals, numbers, and geometrical polygons and bodies. They appeared frequently as part of the decoration program of Genesis manuscripts.³⁹

The idea that the creation of heaven and earth on the first day was the creation of light, angels, and the *materia informis* from which the four elements were created, was accepted by many theologians, e.g., the above-mentioned Thierry of Chartres, who claimed in his *Hexaemeron* that from the moment that God created the four elements, the laws of physics took over and everything then happened according to them (*secundum physicam*). For example, fire caused the evaporation of water, which accumulated above the firmament, and by doing so revealed the earth.⁴⁰ His theory opened the way for the understanding of the first four-five days of Creation in Genesis as a description of the creation of the four elements, and stood at the root of cosmological cycle representations.

In the Freiburg cycle the three reliefs are not the only ones that can be understood scientifically: the relief with the spheres, the so-called “fourth-day relief,” which is the second on the left, is even more outstanding. It portrays a schematic three-dimensional representation of the Cosmos as it was perceived according to Aristotle and to Ptolemy’s *Almagest* and is depicted in astronomical manuscripts. Sacrobosco dealt with it in his *Tractatus de sphaera mundi*, as well as many others. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries Ptolemy’s description of the Cosmos as a concentric system of orbs and spheres, with Earth at the center, was widely accepted and indeed taught, but very seldom presented to the public.⁴¹

bus,” *Commentaries on Boethius by Thierry of Chartres and His School*, ed. Nikolaus Häring (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1971); Nikolaus Häring, “Die Erschaffung der Welt und ihr Schöpfer nach Thierry von Chartres und Clarenbaldus von Arras,” *Platonismus in der Philosophie des Mittelalters*, ed. Werner Beierwaltes. Wege der Forschung, 197 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1969), 161–267.

³⁹ Bober, “*In Principio: Creation Before Time*” (see note 15), 13–33.

⁴⁰ This was a solution to the problem of how a heavy element like water can remain above the heavens and above the air, a much lighter element.

⁴¹ There are some wall paintings in Italy, dated to about the same time as the sculptures in Germany, showing the Cosmos as constructed of spheres, with God and the angels in the *Empirean*; e.g., the depiction of the Creation of the World by Giusto de’Menabuoi, Padua baptistery, 1376–1378; San Gimignano, Chiesa Collegiata, left side of the nave, Bartolo di Fredi, 1367, and in Pisa, “Cosmographia” in Camposanto by Pierro di Puccio, 1391. On the topic of those representation as an indication of the new interest in cosmology, see: Kristen Lippincott, “Giovanni di Paolo’s ‘Creation of the World’ and the Tradition of the ‘Thema Mundi’ in Late Medieval and Renaissance Art,” *The Burlington Magazine* 132 (1990): 462–63; Patricia Harpring, *The Sienese*



Fig. 10



Fig. 11

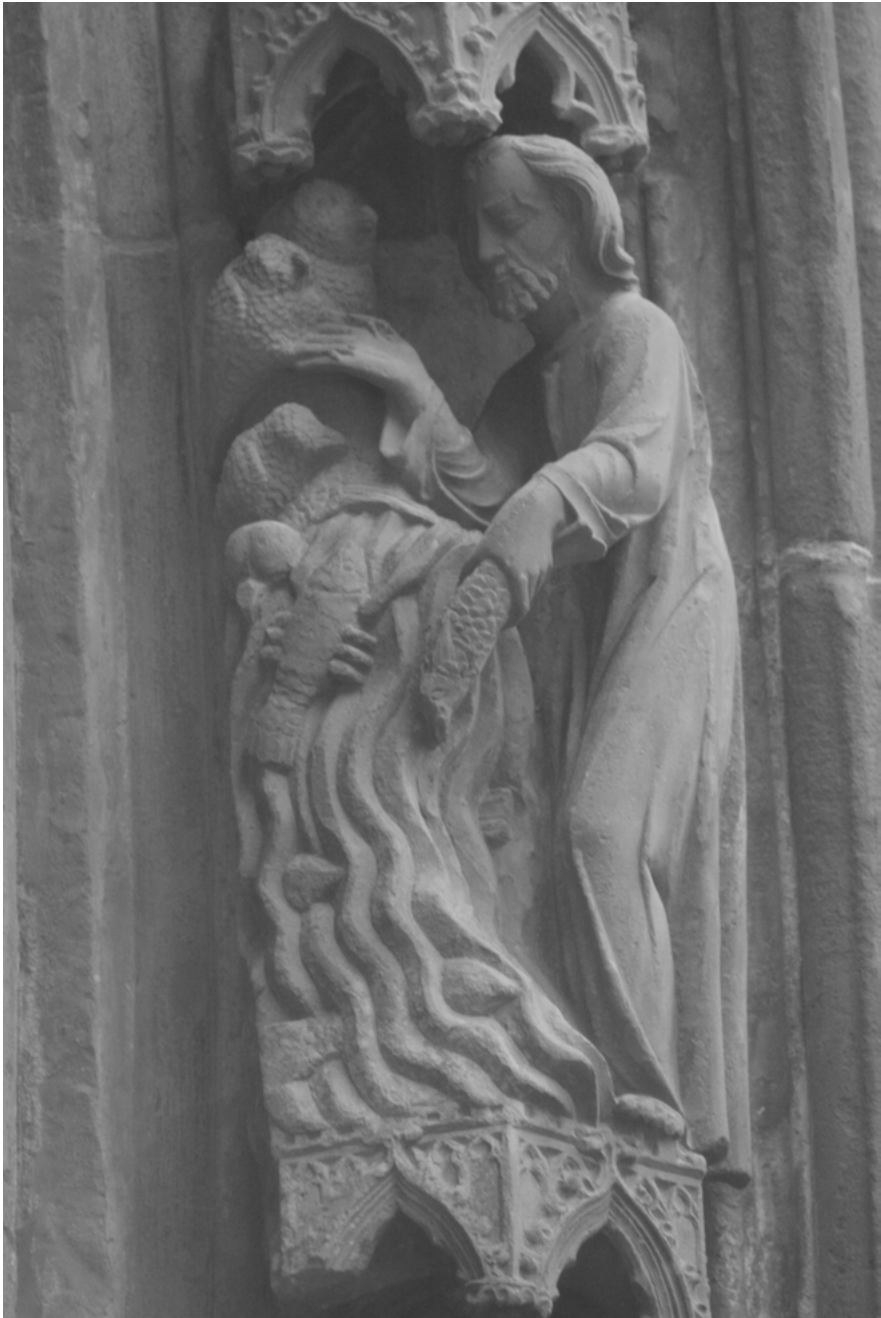


Fig. 12

According to this theory there are seven planets that move in a system of seven spheres.⁴² To these an eighth sphere was added for the fixed stars and a ninth—the crystalline sphere—for movement. The tenth, the *Empyrean* (also: *Empireum*), was considered by theologians as the abode of God and the choirs of angels.⁴³ In the Freiburg relief we can see the moon closest to earth, the sun on the fourth sphere and, on the outer shell, the eighth, the fixed stars, with God pointing at one of them.⁴⁴ The number of spheres is only eight. This seems incorrect, since according to the cosmological theories mentioned above there should be ten spheres. Since the Creator stands in the tenth, the *Empyrean*, it seems that what is missing is the ninth sphere, the crystalline sphere that initiates movement.⁴⁵ The question of the missing sphere becomes even more intriguing when this relief is compared with a similar one in St. Theobald in Thann (sculpted in the 1380s). That relief shows nine spheres plus the *Empyrean* (Fig. 13). Is the depiction of the Cosmos in Freiburg simply an error in its maker's perception, or does it perhaps present a different theory?

I maintain that the way the Cosmos of Freiburg is depicted is indeed not an error but, rather, a very sophisticated solution to the problem of how to create a transparent body—the crystalline sphere—with an opaque material—namely stone (Fig. 6). Thus the upper relief on the left that displays the empty bell is actually representing this very crystalline sphere. This image has no precedents and it depicts this unusual topic in a very idiosyncratic way. Since the crystalline sphere is believed by cosmological theories to create movement, the fact that it is shown as created by God at the very beginning of the cycle, is an important theological statement: unlike pagan theories, Christianity claims that the Cosmos was

Trecento Painter Bartolo di Fredi (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1993), 43; Gaudenz Freuler, *Bartolo di Fredi Cini: Ein Beitrag zur sienesischen Malerei des 14. Jahrhunderts* (Disentis: Desertina Verlag, 1994), 10.

⁴² Michael Pierre Lerner, *Le Monde de Sphere*. vol. 1: *Genèse et triomphe d'une représentation cosmique* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2008), 74–81, 115–21; Edgar Laird, "Astrolabes and the Construction of Time in the Late Middle Ages," *Disputatio: An International Transdisciplinary Journal of the Late Middle Ages* 2 (1997): 51–69; Ido Yavetz, *Wandering Stars and Ethereal Spheres, Landmarks in the History of Greek Astronomy* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Kinneret, Zmora-Bitan, Dvir, 2010), 201–73; Grant, *Planets, Stars and Orbs* (see note 14), 271–323.

⁴³ Schneider proves that the model depicted in Freiburg was influenced by Ptolemy and not by Plato. In Plato's *Timaeus*, the sun appears to be on the second sphere while in Freiburg it is on the fourth. See Schneider, "Ein Modell des Kosmos" (see note 22), 241–48, here 242–44.

⁴⁴ This gesture was interpreted as didactic. The creator's physiognomy was considered to be that of a cleric who is pointing at the luminaries that have just been created as the source of Time. See Weis, "Das Freiburger Schöpfungsportal und das Musterbuch von Strassburg" (see note 30), 188–90.

⁴⁵ Grant, *Planets, Stars and Orbs* (see note 14), 331.



Fig. 13

created *ex nihilo* by God, who initiated its movement.⁴⁶ Thus, right from the beginning of the Creation cycle, God the Creator is manifested as the Unmoved Mover, a fact emphasized by this rare depiction.⁴⁷

The three reliefs on the right that portray the four elements, together with the two on the left—the creation of the spherical Cosmos and the crystalline sphere that initiates its movement are five images that present a visual rendition of a complete cosmological theory. This theory originated in the writings of Greek and Arab philosophers, and led to many disputes in the Latin west from the twelfth century on. The same five reliefs previously identified as possessing common stylistic traits, also represent a common theme. The heretical potential of this imagery could be the reason for the unusual design of this tympanum: the viewer's eyes needed to travel back and forth eight times over the sad results of the rebellion against the Creator, Lucifer being driven from God's side, and Adam and Eve being expelled from Paradise and severely punished after having committed the Original Sin. Thus the cosmological theory is introduced within a

⁴⁶ Augustine: *Confessions*, book 12, chapter 9/7, trans. Albert C. Outler (MCMIV) <http://faculty.georgetown.edu> (last accessed on Oct. 5, 2014). "[...] thus it was that in the beginning and through thy Wisdom which is from thee and born of thy substance thou didst create something and that out of nothing."

⁴⁷ This empty bell has been interpreted by Weis as the firmament. See Weis, "Das Freiburger Schöpfungsportal und das Musterbuch von Strassburg" (see note 30): 181–93.

strong theological framework (Fig. 5). The appearance of the idiosyncratic cosmological imagery on the choir portal is a result of many factors, as we will see.

Literacy and Scientific Erudition among the Lay Public

Understanding the cycle required viewers to be acquainted not only with the Book of Genesis and the biblical story of the Creation, but also with the contemporaneous new scientific theories, some of which were bitterly contested by the Church. The addressee of this portal had necessarily to be educated. This raises the question of whether the audience could understand the message inscribed in the portal. Stock argued for the existence of textual communities in which literate values and modes of thought were disseminated to the illiterate.⁴⁸ We can safely assume that the theological meaning would have been explained in the sermons, but what about any scientific erudition?⁴⁹ Since it is clear from the documentation that the choir and portals were commissioned by the city council, the question of literacy and erudition of the members of the lay public who did not belong to the exclusive groups of the university educated ecclesiastics and had not mastered Latin, becomes a pivotal one for the present study in particular.

⁴⁸ Brian Stock, *The Implication of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the 11th and 12th Centuries* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), 3–91.

⁴⁹ “Literacy” is used here to describe the ability to read Latin and is opposed to illiteracy which means not being able to read Latin. An illiterate could master reading and writing in the vernacular. “*laicus illiterati*” could mean a person who does not know Latin, but is sufficiently educated in the liberal arts. On that topic, see Ruedi Imbach, *Laien in der Philosophie des Mittelalters: Hinweise und Anregungen zu einem vernachlässigten Thema*. Bochumer Studien zur Philosophie, 14 (Amsterdam: B.R. Grüner, 1989), 23; Michael T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Records, England 1066–1307*, 2nd ed. (1979; Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), 145–84; Herbert Grundmann, *Bildung und Sprache*. Monumenta Germaniae historica, 25.3 (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1978), 3–14, 33–43; Stock, *The Implication of Literacy* (see note 46), 3–91; Rosamond McKittrick, *The Uses of Literacy in Early Medieval Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 319–33; Franz H. Bäuml, “Varieties and Consequences of Medieval Literacy and Illiteracy,” *Speculum* 55.2 (1980): 237–65. This becomes clear through Dante’s words, describing himself as an *illiteratus* praising the vernacular: Dante Alighieri, *De vulgari eloquentia*, book 1/1, trans. Steven Boterill http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/italian/staff/lines/community/kenilworth/term2-wk9-dante-reading_2.pdf (last accessed on Oct. 10, 2014).

Ruedi Imbach has contributed to our understanding of this complicated topic.⁵⁰ Even those who could not read Latin, the illiterate, could have been educated otherwise; the latest research has shown that lay people did indeed read philosophy books, translated into the vernacular.⁵¹ Some of these books were quite popular, as the number of translations indicates. Books like *The Consolation of Philosophy* by Boethius were translated into almost every European language. In French alone there are twelve known versions. Five different German translations of the works of Aigidius Romanos are known.⁵²

Another popular work was the *Secretum secretorum* by Pseudo Aristotle.⁵³ Sacroboscus's *De sphaera mundi*, mentioned previously, had many commentaries and translations. The first science book in the German language, Konrad von Megenberg's *Buch von den natürlichen Dingen* (Book of the Natural Things), had just appeared in 1349–1350.⁵⁴ Although Konrad mentions specifically that his book was meant for the educated and that he was against the teaching of science to the laity, his work nevertheless did much to establish a mode of scientific discourse in German.⁵⁵ Dante expressed best Aristotle's notion of humans in regard to philosophy, stating that all humans wish to study philosophy since this is the only way that the human soul can reach perfection.⁵⁶ Dante was also the first

50 Ruedi Imbach, *Laien in der Philosophie des Mittelalters* (see note 49).

51 Imbach, *Laien in der Philosophie des Mittelalters* (see note 49), 9–101; Loris Sturlese, “Filosofia in volgare,” *Filosofia in volgare nel Medioevo: Atti del Convegno della Società Italiana per lo Studio del Pensiero Medievale (SISPM), Lecce 27–29 Settembre, 2002*, ed. Nadia Bray and Loris Sturlese (Louvain-la-Neuve: Fédération internationale des instituts d'études médiévales, 2003), 1–14.

52 The *De consolatio philosophiae* was also translated into English by such a luminary as Geoffrey Chaucer (1343–1400). Imbach, *Laien in der Philosophie des Mittelalters* (see note 49), 40–44.

53 Steven J. Williams, “The Vernacular Tradition of the Pseudo-Aristotelian Secret of Secrets’ in the Middle Ages: Translations, Manuscripts, Readers,” *Filosofia in volgare nel Medioevo* (see note 53), 451–82.

54 Dagmar Gottschall, *Konrad von Megenbergs: Buch von den natürlichen Dingen, ein Dokument deutschsprachiger Albertus Magnus-Rezeption im 14. Jahrhundert*. Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters, 83 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2004).

55 Vitorio Coletti, *L'éloquence de la chaire, Victoires et défaites du Latin entre Moyen Age et Renaissance* (Paris: Édition du Cerf, 1987), 70–71.

56 Dante Alighieri, *Il convivio*, I/1, Princeton Dante Project, <http://etcweb.princeton.edu/dante/pdp/> (last accessed: Sept., 11, 2014). “Sì come dice lo Filosofo nel principio della Prima Filosofia, tutti li uomini naturalmente desiderano di sapere. La ragione di che puote essere [ed] è che ciascuna cosa, da providenza di prima natura impinta, è inclinabile alla sua propria perfezione; onde, acciò che la scienza è ultima perfezione della nostra anima, nella quale sta la nostra ultima felicità, tutti naturalmente al suo desiderio semo subietti.”

to praise the vernacular as the natural and the best language, available to every human being.⁵⁷ Featuring the Creator as the God of the Beginning and the End on the Freiburg portal, the beginning is not only that of the Bible; nor is it that of Genesis or of John. Rather, it is a scientific one that required an educated audience. The north portal becomes even more intriguing in attesting to the scientific erudition of the time and place.

Administration and Literacy

Michael Clanchy has already shown that the path to literacy was led by the administrative need to maintain registers, to calculate taxes, and to sit in judgment according to a set of laws. All these new occupations required education.⁵⁸ This was also required at Freiburg, which was founded at the beginning of the large wave of town constructions in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and which swiftly became an important commercial center.⁵⁹ Its inhabitants became organized and their city council, the “Rat,” was the first one in the Upper Rhine with documented activity reaching back to 1178. The elected enacted and executed the commercial laws.⁶⁰ We can still witness the approved size of a loaf of bread or a bucket of coal, as marked on the east wall of the west portal of “Our Beloved Lady” (Fig. 14).

From 1293 the burghers were the majority in the Rat (city council), with a civic militia to maintain public order at their disposal. In 1331 the town received privileges from King Louis IV, the “Bavarian” (1282–1347) and became an impe-

57 Dante Alighieri, *De vulgari eloquentia*, Book 1/1–4, trans. Steven Boterill http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/italian/staff/lines/community/kenilworth/term2-wk9-dante-reading_2.pdf (last accessed on Sept. 11, 2014), “[...] Of these two kinds of languages [vernacular and grammar, meaning Latin, N.G.] the noble is the vernacular [...]”

58 Clanchy was dealing with England after the twelfth century, but the many case studies indicate that the same idea might hold true for other places as well. See Michael T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Records* (see note 49), 145–84.

59 Bruno Gebhardt et al., *Handbuch der Deutschen Geschichte, Frühzeit und Mittelalter*, vol. 1, ed. Herbert Grundmann (Stuttgart: Union Verlag, 1954), 388–480; Eberhard Isenmann, *Die deutsche Stadt im Spätmittelalter, 1250–1500, Stadtgestalt, Recht, Stadtrecht, Kirche, Gesellschaft, Wirtschaft* (Stuttgart: Verlag Eugen Ulmer, 1988); Klaus Schreiner and Ulrich Meier, *Stadtrecht und Bürgerfreiheit: Handlungsspielräume deutscher und italienischer Städte des späten Mittelalters und in der Frühen Neuzeit*. Bürgertum: Beiträge zu Europäischen Gesellschaftsgeschichte, 7 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994).

60 Heiko Haumann and Hans Schadek, *Geschichte der Stadt Freiburg im Breisgau*, vol. 1: *Von den Anfänge bis zum “Neuen Stadtrecht” von 1520* (Stuttgart: Konrad Theiss Verlag, 1966), 1–60.



Fig. 14

rial city. Louis did much to develop the administration of his kingdom and Freiburg received the same treatment. From now on its citizens could sit in judgment, collect and pay taxes directly to the king, maintain registers and records, and more. In local politics Freiburg became part of the fourteenth-century Swabian league of towns.⁶¹ In his *Golden Bull* (1356), Charles IV (1316–1378), who continued to develop the administration of his predecessor, ordered that the sons of people working at his court must learn from the age of seven to read and write in Latin, German, and Bohemian.⁶² In the year 1348 he established in Prague the first university in German speaking regions north to the Alps.

Promoting Civic Pride

The privileges received from the emperors opened up new occupation options while the new professions needed those who practiced them to be educated. The citizens of Freiburg, realizing that education offered new opportunities to climb the social ladder, established a Latin school as preparation for further education at the universities. Documented donations by burghers to the parish church attest to the fact that the building of the choir was understood as an important communal project, since it changed the patronage of the church as well as making it possible for prominent families of the town to have their own private chapels.⁶³ The construction of the new choir and designating it as a major corporate effort enhanced the social capital, proclaiming the citizens' independence and political power and enhancing it.⁶⁴ The parish church became the main symbol of the town and a source of pride for its inhabitants.

61 Heiko Haumann and Hans Schadek, *Geschichte der Stadt Freiburg im Breisgau* (see note 60).

62 Brend-Ulrich Hergemöller, *Fürsten, Herren und Städte zu Nürnberg, 1355–1356: Die Entstehung der "Goldenen Bulle" Karls IV.* (Cologne and Vienna: Böhlau, 1983), 156–227; Michail A. Bojcov, "Der Kern der goldenen Bulle von 1356," *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* 69.2 (2013): 581–614.

63 Jan Klaus Philipp, *Pfarrkirchen, Funktion, Motivation, Architektur: Eine Studie am Beispiel der Pfarrkirchen der schwäbischen Reichsstädte im Spätmittelalter* (Marburg a.d.L.: Jonas Verlag, 1987), 9–29. Philipp claims that building new choirs spread throughout Swabia and was the means of the citizens to change the traditional patronage of the local lord, to enjoy private chapels, and to influence the election of the church pastor.

64 For the term "social capital," see Robert D. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993); Marcus Jacob, "Long-Term Persistence: The Free and Imperial City Experience in Germany" (SSRN – Social Science Research Network, July, 2010), 1–52; http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1616973 (last accessed on Sept. 4, 2013).

Another element of the architectural construction can attest to the role of the project in enhancing the civic pride of the burghers. In the ongoing competition between Freiburg and Strasbourg, a rich bishopric town with its own cathedral, the church was a means to express this competition, and even to win it. In the fourteenth century Freiburg achieved an important breakthrough in architecture as it was the first town to decorate its parish church with a tower of the openwork spire type.⁶⁵ The height of the tower reached 106 meters, declaring not only the existence of the church in the town, but also the existence of the town itself from afar. The scientific ideas represented on the portal were another way of winning the competition, since the Strasbourg cathedral also exhibited a developed cosmological cycle on its west portal.⁶⁶

The civic pride of the citizens of Freiburg that led them to build that church tower also made them decorate the north portal of the choir with an imagery attesting to their education and scientific erudition. This imagery demonstrated that they were now part of the elite, belonging to the exclusive classes that had mastered the scientific knowledge in the past, the nobility and ecclesiastics. This manifestation of knowledge was a political statement that identified them as belonging to the ruling class. In the developing city of the fourteenth century, education and scientific erudition had become a status symbol, and this is why it became part of the north portal of the choir.⁶⁷

65 Robert Bork, "Into Thin Air: France, Germany, and the Invention of the Openwork Spire." *The Art Bulletin* 85.1 (2003): 25–53. As Bork has argued, this architectural innovation actually belonged to Strasbourg Cathedral which was the first to start construction of such a tower. However, Freiburg was the first to complete its construction, due to the burghers having financed it. That is the reason why it was considered to be a German innovation, while actually it was a French one.

66 The cosmological cycle on the west portal of Strasburg is considered to be the first of the five of cosmological cycles of the Upper Rhine. It was destroyed in the French Revolution, but according to an engraving from the seventeenth century made by Baron for a model book, one can see that this cycle too depicts a scientific creation. See Zahlten, *Creatio mundi* (see note 10), 130–31.

67 The idea that cosmological imagery was one of the ways to demonstrate civic pride is not new. This topic has been researched in connection with the City States in Italy. Astrological symbolism and imagery appear on public secular buildings. It was suggested that this was the way to express the idea promoted by the leading members of the society, of a genealogical connection of the contemporaneous elite with the Ancient Romans. See Dieter Blume, *Regenten des Himmels, astrologische Bilder in Mittelalter und Renaissance* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2000); Hans Belting "Bilder in der Stadt—zur Thematik des Bandes," *Malerei und Stadtkultur in der Danteszeit: die Argumentation der Bilder*, ed. id. and Dieter Blume (Munich: Hirmer Verlag, 1989), 7–12; Dieter Blume, "Die Argumentation der Bilder—zur Entstehung einer städtischen Malerei," *Malerei und Stadtkultur*, 12–22; Bram Kempers, "Gesetz und Kunst: Ambrogio Loren-

The Intellectual Mystical Background

The appearance of the cosmological ideas on the five portals of the Upper Rhine, including the one at Freiburg, cannot be explained simply by regional or local politics or economic developments. Only an evident source of knowledge in the urban environment can explain this development. My hypothesis is that this source was that of the Mendicant Orders, especially the Dominicans. The Dominican Order which at the beginning of the thirteenth century was given the task of preaching against heresy, stood at the heart of a particular theological-philosophical development in Germany.⁶⁸ In their preaching they advanced the idea that Wisdom is the share of God in Man and that it is imperative to learn about God's creation. This had to be achieved by studying all available knowledge about His creation, and philosophy was considered a proper tool for this purpose.⁶⁹ Thus the assimilation of scientific texts by means of translation and commentary played an important role in the activities of the Order, and was shared with the public through teaching and preaching.⁷⁰

zettis Fresken im Palazzo Pubblico in Siena," *Malerei und Stadtkultur*, 71–84; Maria Monica Donato, "Aristoteles in Siena: Fresken eines Sienesischen Amtsgebäudes in Asciano," *Malerei und Stadtkultur*, 105–14.

68 John B. Freed, *The Friars and German Society in the Thirteenth Century* (EBook: Medieval Academy of America, 1977; <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=acls;cc=acls;view=toc;idno=heb01192.0001.001> (last accessed on Oct. 29, 2014).

69 Roger French and Andrew Cunningham, *Before Science: The Invention of the Friars' Natural Philosophy* (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1996); Marian Michèle Mulchaney, "First the Bow is Bent in Study..." *Dominican Education Before 1350* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1998), 1–47, 351–80. About Albert's intellectual work, see James A. Weisheipl OP, "The Life and Works of St. Albert the Great," *Albertus Magnus and the Sciences: Commemorative Essays, 1980*, ed. James A. Weisheipl OP (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1980), 13–51; Paul Hossfeld, *Albertus Magnus als Naturphilosoph und Naturwissenschaftler* (Bonn: Albertus Magnus Institut, 1983).

70 Another interesting case of a scientific description in a cemetery is Pietro di Puccio's "Cosmographia" a wall painting in Camposanto in Pisa, dated 1391 (already mentioned in note 41). This painting describes the Creator holding the Cosmos in his arms while the Four Elements, the spheres, the Zodiac and the angels can be clearly discerned. As claimed by Bolzoni, contemporary scientific knowledge was transferred to the spectators by the Dominican preaching and this is what made it possible for lay people to understand the connection of Death with the scientific idea of the Creation. Bolzoni mentions in particular the influential preaching of the Dominican Giordano da Pisa (1255–1311). See Lina Bolzoni, *The Web of Images, Vernacular Preaching from its Origins to St. Bernardino da Siena* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 26–29. Bolzoni's research points at a wide cultural influence of Dominican vernacular preaching which included teaching of certain aspects of natural philosophy in the Latin West.

Loris Sturlese claims that the German Dominican School stood at the heart of the intellectual development in Germany in the late Middle Ages.⁷¹ He claims the establishment of the *studium generale* in Cologne by Albert the Great in the year 1248 to be the most important event in German intellectual life in the Middle Ages. Kurt Flasch suggested naming that school of thought, the School of Albert the Great, since Albert was the key figure in this development.⁷² In addition to his tremendously influential intellectual work of translations and commentary of many philosophical works such as all of Aristotle's and Pseudo Dionysius's writings, he also established sixty-two Dominican schools along the Rhine from Cologne to Basel.⁷³ Albert had many influential disciples, such as Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) and Ulrich of Strasburg (1220–1277), to name but two of them. His work influenced theologians like Meister Eckhart (1260–1328), Johannes Tauler (1300–1366), and Heinrich Seuse (1295–1366).⁷⁴ Alain De Libera suggested that this individual line of theological thought that developed along the Rhine should be termed “The Mysticism of the Upper Rhine.”⁷⁵

The German Dominican School or the Mysticism of the Upper Rhine had a prominent role in spreading education in German-speaking lands. The political

71 Loris Sturlese, “Albert der Grosse und die deutsche philosophische Kultur des Mittelalters,” *Averroismus in Mittelalter und in der Renaissance*, ed. Friedrich Niewöhner and Loris Sturlese (Zürich: Spur, 1994), 133–47.

72 Kurt Flasch, “Von Dietrich zu Albert,” *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Theologie und Philosophie* 32 (1986): 7–26.

73 James A. Weisheipl OP, “The Life and Works of St. Albert the Great,” (see note 69) 13–51; Paul Hossfeld, *Albertus Magnus als Naturphilosoph* (see note 69).

74 All three were theologians and mystics who preached in the vernacular as well as in Latin. Their writings had a great influence on Lay people. See Loris Sturlese, *Homo Divinus, Philosophische Projekte in Deutschland zwischen Meister Eckhart und Heinrich Seuse* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2007).

75 Alain de Libera, *La mystique rhénane d’Albert le Grand à Maître Eckhart* (Paris: Édition du Seuil, 1994); Kurt Ruh, *Die Mystik des deutschen Predigerordens und ihre Grundlegung durch die Scholastik. Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik*, vol. 3 (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1996), 214–528; Herbert Grundmann, *Religious Movements in the Middle Ages: the Historical Links between Heresy, the Mendicant Orders and the Women’s Religious Movement in the 12th and 13th Centuries, with the Historical Foundation of the German Mysticism*, trans. Steven Rowan (1977; Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 7–139; Kurt Flasch, *Meister Eckhart: Die Geburt der “Deutschen Mystik” aus dem Geist der arabischen Philosophie* (Munich: Verlag C. H. Beck, 2006); Meister Eckhart, *The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises and Defense*, trans. Edmund Colledge and Bernard McGinn (London: SPCK, 1981); Heinrich Seuse, *The Life of a Servant*, trans. James M. Clark (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 1952, 1982); McGinn, *The Harvest of Mysticism in Medieval Germany (1300–1500)*. The Presence of God (New York: Crossroads, 2005), 195–239, 94–194; Markus Enders, “Seuses reife Spiritualität in seiner Ulmer Zeit,” *Heinrich Seuse Jahrbuch* 3 (2010): 1–78.

administration of the Order established by Albert the Great in the German province was the basis of its intellectual activity. The teaching of the Dominicans to lay people was through preaching and through the infrastructure of schools as well as by the teaching of traveling Dominicans. Albert himself moved along the Rhine with teaching assignments and taught theology in the Dominican monastery in Freiburg for a whole year, in 1235.⁷⁶

Scientific concepts could have been popularized in teaching; much of this work was done by preachers, many of whom gave their sermons in the vernacular.⁷⁷ Teaching assignments of the Order to different groups of lay people became part of the Dominican task; for example, the *cura monialium*, the spiritual care for the nuns, and the teachings to the beguines, created a whole new audience that became acquainted with philosophical ideas.⁷⁸ Other groups of lay

76 Franz Flamm, *Albert der Grosse in Freiburg im Breisgau: dargestellt anhand geschichtlicher Quellen* (Freiburg i. Br.: St. Albert-Bischofslinde, 1986).

77 Dominicans and Franciscans were engaged in preaching, and scientific concepts could have been introduced to the public this way. See David D'Avray, "Philosophy in Preaching: the case of a Franciscan based in thirteenth-century Florence (Servasanto da Faenza)," *Literature and Religion in the Later Middle Ages, Philosophical Studies in Honor of Siegfried Wenzel*, ed. Richard G. Newhauser, and John A. Alford (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1995), <https://archive.org/details/literaturereligi00newhuoft>, 263–73 (last accessed on Oct. 29, 2014); Bolzoni, *The Web of Images* (see note 70). I would like to thank Professor Julian Gardner for bringing these works to my attention.

78 Herbert Grundmann, *Religious Movements in the Middle Ages* (see note 63); Katherinette Bodarwé, "Schadet Grammatik der Frauenfrömmigkeit?" *Frauen-Kloster-Kunst, Neue Forschungen zur Kulturgeschichte des Mittelalters*, ed. Jeffrey Hamburger, Carola Jäggi, Susan Marti, and Hedwig Röckelein (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 63–73; Jeffrey Hamburger, *The Visual and the Visionary: Art and Female Spirituality in Late Medieval Germany* (New York: Zone Books, 1998); Jeffery Hamburger, *Nuns as Artists: the Visual Culture of a Medieval Convent* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Regina D. Schiewer, "Sermons for Nuns of the Observance Movement," in *Medieval Monastic Preaching*, ed. Carolyn Muesig (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 75–92; Bernard McGinn, "Introduction: Meister Eckhart and the Beguines in the Context of Vernacular Theology," *Meister Eckhart and the Beguine Mystics: Hadewijch of Brabant, Mechthild of Magdeburg and Marguerite Porete*, ed. Bernard McGinn (New York: Continuum, 1994), 1–16; Franz Josef Schweitzer, *Meister Eckhart und der Laie, Ein antihierarchischer Dialog des 14. Jahrhunderts aus den Niederlanden* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1997); Sturlese presumes that there was no such an intimate connection between Meister Eckhart and the *cura monialium*. He claims that since this task was time-consuming, it was the duty only of second-rate intellectuals among the brethren, whereas Eckhart was considered to be a top intellectual, being a magister and playing an important role at the Paris University and in the Preachers' Order. See Loris Sturlese, "Meister Eckhart und die *cura monialium*: Kritische Anmerkungen zu einem Forschungsgeschichten Mythos," *Meister Eckharts Strassburger Jahrzehnt*, ed. Dagmar Gottschall and Andrés Quero-Sánchez. *Meister-Eckhart Jahrbuch*, 2 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2008), 1–16. At the same

people that encountered the philosophical ideas were the Beghards and the Third Order, all of whom were seeking an orthodox life of devotion without enclosure.

The philosophical culture of the German Dominican School evolved individually from that of Paris University and became part of the European philosophical culture. The specific locality of a certain line of thought in the late Middle Ages is not easy to define: the dominant figures of the Order were educated in Paris, they taught there and even fulfilled prominent functions there.⁷⁹ Contrary to the line of thought of the Theology Faculty of the Paris University in regard to cosmology and the Creation, and despite the condemnations and prohibitions from Paris issued under the patronage of the Pope in Avignon, intellectual life in Germany, in the Upper Rhine, developed locally and independently.⁸⁰ The theologians of the Upper Rhine were well acquainted with the School of Paris, but deliberately chose another path. This way of teaching combined the scientific understanding of the cosmos with the preparation of the Christian soul for death, and the encounter with its Maker. This explains the conjunction of the external tympanum—the Cosmological Creation, and the internal one—the Passion of Christ and the crucifixion, on the portal that leads into the cemetery.

The Argument of the Lay Literature

Another line of spreading scientific literacy was that of the vernacular literature. The Creation was an important subject in the apocrypha, as for example described in *The Cave of Treasures*.⁸¹ In the fourteenth century these stories became

time there are documents attesting to Eckhart preaching in different churches along the Rhine, so that he could have influenced the lay public, including women, through these sermons.

⁷⁹ For example Albert was sent from Paris to Cologne, Ulrich of Strasburg moved to Paris, and Eckhart was twice a magister in Paris. Sturlese, *Philosophie im Mittelalter* (see note 14), 72–108; Weisheipl, *Albertus Magnus and the Sciences* (see note 69), 13–52.

⁸⁰ Still under the threat of excommunication, as in the cases of William of Ockham (1287–1347), Meister Eckhart and others. William J. Courtnay, *Ockham and Ockhamism, Studies in the Dissimination and Impact of His Thought* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2008), 91–103; Meister Eckhart: *The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defence*, trans. and intro. Edmund Colledge, O.S.A. and Bernard McGinn (London: Paulist Press, 1981), 5–23; Ruh, *Die Mystik des Deutschen Predigerordens* (see note 75), 236–57.

⁸¹ Brian Murdoch, *The Apocryphal Adam and Eve in Medieval Europe, Vernacular Translations and Adaptations of the 'Vita Adae and Evae'* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Hans Martin von Erfa, "Adambücher," *Ikonomie der Genesis: Die christlichen Bildthemen aus dem Alten Testament und ihre Quellen*, vol. 1 (Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1989), 249–314; *The*

increasingly didactic. Scientific and analytic elements were integrated into the familiar narratives, as for example in a poem about the Creation that seems to indicate some knowledge of the scientific cosmological approach:

In the beginning, on the first day, meaning the Holy Sunday, [...] God created the Heaven and Earth and the Water and the Air and the Light and the invisible forces, meaning the angels, [...] as the four weak elements, meaning coldness, hotness, dryness and wetness [humidity] were put in his hand [...].⁸²

The integration of these ideas in courtly literature is also noticeable, as for example in Hartmann von Aue's works: in his Arthurian romance *Erec* (ca. 1170) he gives a detailed description of the four elements and the celestial orbs embroidered on the cloth covering the horse beneath the saddle of the hero, a gift from his beloved lady.⁸³

Perhaps a more intriguing example, however, in connection with the north portal of Freiburg's choir, is a poem that seems to express the same ideas displayed on the outer tympanum with those on the inner one. This is the poem "Got in vier elementen sich erscheint," meaning: "God lets Himself appear [or be seen] in the four elements," by Rumelant von Sachsen.⁸⁴ This poem belongs to the genre of the 'Sangspruchdichtung' which is a didactic poetic form that involves logical, sometimes quite complex, argumentation. It quotes from different sources and invents new words when needed. In his poem Rumelant uses the

Book of the Cave of Treasures, A History of the Patriarchs and the Kings, their Successors from the Creation to the Crucifixion of Christ, trans. Wallis Budge, from the Syriac text of the British Museum, MS.ADD.25875 (London: Religious Tract Society, 1927), 51.

82 Paul Riessler, *Alt-jüdisches Schriftum ausserhalb der Bibel* (1928; Augsburg: F. H. Kerle, 1996), 943–44, Digital Sammlung, Universität Düsseldorf. Trans. P. Riessler: "Am Anfange, am ersten Tage, nämlich dem heiligen Sonntage, [...] schuf Gott den Himmel und die Erde und das Wasser und die Luft und das Licht und die unsichtbaren Mächte, das heisst die Engel und Erzengel [...] [...] Und die Engel sahen, wie diese vier schwachen Elemente, nämlich Kälte, Wärme, Trockenheit und Feuchtigkeit, in die hohle Fläche seiner Hand gelegt wurden."

83 Hartmann von Aue, *Arthurian Romances, Tales and Lyric poetry, The Complete Works of Hartmann von Aue*, trans. Frank Tobin, Kim Vivian, Richard H. Lawson (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 137, verses 7594–642; The examples are abundant. I have chosen different genres that were intended for different lay publics.

84 Peter Kern, "Got in vier Elementen sich erscheint: Ein Lied Rumelants von Sachsen," *Neue Forschungen zur Mittelhochdeutschen Sangspruchdichtung, Zeitschrift für Deutsche Philologie*, Sonderheft, 119 (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 2000): 130–42; William Layher, "Meister Rumelant and Co., German Poets (Real or Imagined) in 13th Century Denmark," *Neue Forschungen*, 142–49, here 146. I would like to express my gratitude to Prof. Freimut Löser for bringing this poem to my attention.

four elements allegorically to describe the meaning of the Passion of Christ in attempt to visualize it. This poem and many others of its kind attest to the connection between eschatological ideas and scientific ones common in the vernacular. It indicates a sophisticated connection between two different fields of knowledge.

Similar ideas are demonstrated on the north portal of Freiburg. The external tympanum displays the Creation with the four elements, revealing scientific ideas, while the internal tympanum portrays the Passion and Crucifixion of Christ. As Klaus Grubmüller has suggested, the Latin erudite literature was highly influential on the German vernacular literature, mainly on the poetry of the late Middle Ages.⁸⁵ In the same way it seems to have been influential on art, as demonstrated in the Cosmological Cycles.

Conclusion

Education and erudition of the lay public in the Middle Ages remain an unsolved issue. I am not suggesting that lay scientific knowledge was at the level of the scholastics at Paris University. We do not have sufficient written evidence to help us to estimate the degree of lay literacy, since documentation was mostly in the hands of the exclusive educated groups, who had no interest in documenting lay literacy. However, the appearance of scientific cosmological images on the Freiburg tympanum cannot be accidental, and may help us to understand the status of knowledge among the lay public. In erecting this idiosyncratic monument, the burghers of Freiburg were proclaiming themselves as belonging to the elite. Not only were they capable of administrating the town, partaking in the League of the Swabian imperial cities, and building the choir, but as far as scientific knowledge is concerned, they considered themselves to be as good as any intellectual elite, whether ecclesiastic or noble. The citizens of Freiburg took great pride in their political and administrative achievements. It was, however, their education and erudition that they chose to demonstrate on the north portal of their new choir. Such sculpted documentation indicates that scientific knowledge was becoming both required and available among growing social circles, and that it had become increasingly integrated into the town's people life (or death?).

⁸⁵ Klaus Grubmüller, "Letteratura di erudizione in lingua Tedesca," *Filosofia in volgare nel Medioevo*, (see note 51), 15–26.

The encounter with Death facing anyone walking into the cemetery, was not only strongly emotive and moral, as portrayed in the tympana, but also didactic. The reliefs describing the Creation of the Cosmos and Mankind, as the creation of matter and the creation of the four elements, reflected both the creation of life and the reality that material body disintegrates after death; but it also reflected that Redemption is possible with the Grace of God, as shown in the internal tympanum. The sacraments that took place in the St. Andrew chapel reinforced this belief.

The cosmological reliefs on the portal facing the cemetery should be read as a document attesting to the change in the status of knowledge and learning. This change points at new channels and routes that made it possible for the general public to become acquainted with secular learning. These new ideas were propagated on the funerary reliefs of the north portal of the choir. The presentation of these images on the church portal, although rare, indicates the beginning of a growing awareness of the laity and an interest in secular education. It might also indicate the approaching end to the Church's monopoly on education.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ I am grateful to Prof. Connie Scarborough for her help with my English.

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The Effects of the Black Death: The Plague in Fourteenth-Century Religion, Literature, and Art

*Adieu, farewell earths blisse,
This world uncertaine is,
Fond are lifes lustful joyes,
Death proves them all but toyes,
None from his darts can flye;
I am sick, I must dye:
Lord, have mercy on us.*
“The Rattle Bag” by Dafydd ap Gwilym

Father abandoned child, wife husband, one brother another; for this illness seemed to strike through the breath and sight. And so they died. And none could be found to bury the dead for money or friendship. Members of a household brought their dead to a ditch as best they could, without priest, without divine offices ... great pits were dug and piled deep with the multitude of dead. And they died by the hundreds both day and night ... And as soon as those ditches were filled more were dug ... And I, Agnolo di Tura, called the Fat, buried my five children with my own hands. And there were also those who were so sparsely covered with earth that the dogs dragged them forth and devoured many bodies throughout the city. There was no one who wept for any death, for all awaited death. And so many died that all believed it was the end of the world. This situation continued [from May] until September.
Agnolo di Tura of Sienna

Personal revelations and stories such as Dafydd ap Gwilym and Agnolo’s saturated the fourteenth century as the reality of the Black Death impinged upon every aspect of life throughout Europe, in Asia and in Africa. According to Byron Lee Grigsby, Robert S. Gottfried reports that “The Rand Corporation ranks the Black Death as the third worst catastrophe to affect the world.”¹ The Dies Irae (funeral hymn of the day of doom) ... La Dans Macabre² ... the Ars Moriendi (hymn of

1 Robert S Gottfried, *The Black Death: Natural and Human Disaster in Medieval Europe* (New York: Macmillan, 1983), xiv, quoted in Byron Lee Grigsby, *Pestilence in Medieval and Early Modern English Literature* (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), 59.

2 *The Dans Macabre* or Dance of Death, an allegory found in art, drama, and printed material, consists of Death personified leading dancing characters from all walks of life to the grave—including a ruler or pope, monk, child, beautiful girl, all as skeletons. These were inspired by the Black Death, reminding people of the fragility of life. The earliest artistic example is derived from the frescoed cemetery of the Church of the Holy Innocents in Paris (1424). See Kveld of Nyx at

dying well), the frescoed cemetery of the Church of the Holy Innocents all comprise a rich European aural, visual, and tactile cultural climate, based on the deaths endured by perhaps twenty-five million Europeans from 1347 to 1352.³ As S. H. Rigby suggests,

The Black Death actually seems to have been made up of three related diseases: bubonic plague, the bacillus of which is carried from person to person by rat fleas; septicaemic plague, a form of bubonic plague where the infection is so massive that the victim dies even before the tell-tale appearance of the buboes in the groin, armpits and neck; and pneumonic plague, which infects the victim's lungs and which, unlike bubonic plague, can be passed directly from person to person. Once infected with bubonic plague, the victim has a 90% chance of dying, whilst with pneumonic plague, the most deadly bacterial disease known to medicine, death is inevitable.⁴

On a wider scale, the Black Death or plague behind this momentous social collapse inspired a new brand of religious expression, literary production, artistic creation, and socioeconomic culture positively and negatively, forever changing the intellectual world. Church and art historians such as Emile Mâle,⁵ cultural and literary historians such as Norman Cantor,⁶ Carolyn Bynum Walker and Paul Freedman,⁷ economists such as Fernand Braudel,⁸ demographers and infectious diseases specialists such as Graham Twigg,⁹ and general historians depict the past pandemic of a culture turned morbid. Scholars now consider what happened and how the populace responded. Many fine studies have acknowledged various ramifications of this catastrophic Black Death throughout Europe after 1350. As Aron Ja. Gurevich indicates:

<http://kvltofnyx.tumblr.com/post/71253444012/danse-macabre-la-mort-universelle> (last accessed on Dec. 5, 2014.)

³ Jean Elliot Johnson and Donald James Johnson, *The Human Drama: World History From 500 to 1450 C.E.* (Princeton, NJ: Marcus Wiener Publishers, 2002), 301.

⁴ S. H. Rigby, *English Society in the Later Middle Ages: Class, Status and Gender* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 80–81.

⁵ Emile Mâle, *The Gothic Image: Religious Art in France of the Thirteenth Century*, trans. Dora Nussey (1913; Boulder, CO, Berkeley, CA, et al.: Westview Press, 1973).

⁶ Norman F. Cantor, *In the Wake of the Plague: The Black Death and the World It Made* (New York, London, Toronto, et al.: The Free Press of Simon and Schuster, 2001), 204.

⁷ Carolyn Bynum Walker and Paul Freedman ed., *Last Things: Death and the Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000).

⁸ Fernand Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism 15th–18th Century*, Vol. 1: *The Structure of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

⁹ Twigg, Graham, *The Black Death: A Biological Reappraisal* (London: Batsford, 1984).

A decrease in economic activity and the colossal population decline that followed the Great Plague of 1348–49 (which was understood by contemporaries as a manifestation of divine wrath for the sins of humankind) prompted a serious psychological, social, and moral crisis that struck the merchant along with the rest of society. Death became a close acquaintance and a permanent threat.¹⁰

The persistent and overwhelming prevalence of death generated powerful religious, literary, and artistic images of skeletal figures, rotting corpses, and vividly emotional Passion scenes of Jesus Christ. Modern writers have been stirred by the fascinating evolution brought about by this intriguing epidemic. John Henderson¹¹ has written about Florence, Milton Meiss¹² about art in Florence and Siena, Ormrod and Lindley¹³ about England, Samuel Cohn¹⁴ about Italy, Graham Caie¹⁵ about opposing cultures in England, Bowsky¹⁶ about Siena, and others about Europe in general. However, the numerous cultural and artistic consequences of such extensive devastation on religious thinking, literary production, and artistic creation have yet to be fully categorized and compared.

Preceding famines may have diminished the English population of six million (see Cantor's *In the Wake of the Plague*¹⁷; John Hatcher's *Plague, Population, and The English Economy*¹⁸; Hilton's *Bondsmen Made Free*¹⁹; and Binski's *Medieval Death*²⁰), but the Black Death utterly crushed the citizenry. During their century-long struggle back, victims found multiple methods of coping with the

10 Aron Ja. Gurevich, "The Merchant," *The Medieval World*, ed. Jacques LeGoff, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (1990; London: Parkgate Books, 1997), 242–83; here 274.

11 John Henderson, "The Black Death in Florence," *The Death in Towns*, ed. S. Bassett (Leicester: University Press, 1992).

12 Millard Meiss, *Painting in Florence and Siena After the Black Death* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957), 1964.

13 Mark Ormrod, and Phillip Lindsay, ed., *The Black Death in England* (Stamford, UK: Paul Watkins, 1995).

14 Samuel K Cohn, Jr., *The Cult of Remembrance and the Black Death: Six Renaissance Cities in Central Italy* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).

15 Graham Caie, "Oh, What a Lovely Plague: The Effect of the Black Death on High and Low Cultures in the English Middle Ages," *RANAM: Recherches Anglaise et Nord Americaines* 34 (2006): 21–31.

16 William M. Bowsky, *A Medieval Italian Commune: Siena Under the Nine 1287–1355* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981).

17 Norman H. Cantor, *In the Wake of the Plague* (see note 6).

18 John Hatcher, *Plague, Population, and the English Economy* (London: MacMillan, 1977).

19 Rodney H. Hilton, *Bondsmen Made Free* (New York: Methuen, 1977).

20 Paul Binski, *Medieval Death: Ritual and Representation* (London: British Museum Press, 1996).

shocking loss of family, friends, and neighbors. Their communities had dissolved before their eyes. As Gordon Home observes,

After ten years, a third of the walled area [of London] was void of inhabitants. The main effect of this fearful visitation was to dislocate the economic structure of the kingdom. Labour became scarce, and the working man's services were so valuable that he could extract higher wages Further, there was a tendency to migrate from one place to another.²¹

The lasting impression such deadly chaos and sorrowful losses imprinted upon citizens' minds triggered a vast emotional obsession and cultural change. Now the new norm reached a continual highly emotional pitch—in religion, literature, and art.

I. Religion: Devotional Works and Practices

Anne Clark Bartlett and Thomas H. Bestul point out that the years between 1350 and 1450 were:

a remarkably active literary period during which a great many devotional works and religious works of all types were written. By all accounts, works of popular piety far outnumbered the more currently studied dream visions, lyrics, and narrative poetry that were produced during the period.²²

Obviously, the tenor of the religious culture had evolved into a more emotional, pietistic experience especially for the laity, which persisted for a century as the effects of the Black Death continued to control popular emotions. While devotional literature began in the eleventh century, as Bartlett and Bestul point out:

the twelfth century is marked by the growth of affective piety, or a form of spirituality that differed from that of previous centuries by placing much greater emphasis on self-examination, the inner emotions, and the cultivation of an interior life. This form of piety was typically anchored in devotion to Christ in his human form, with special attention to the events of the Passion ... The flamboyant piety of the later fourteenth and fifteenth centuries developed from these roots ... [I]ts dominant expressions were notable for heightened degrees of emotionalism and a preoccupation with the tortured body of Christ and the grief of the Virgin Mary.²³

²¹ Gordon Home, *Medieval London* (1927; London: Bracken Books, 1994).

²² Anne Clark Bartlett and Thomas H. Bestul, ed., *Cultures of Piety: Middle English Devotional Literature in Translation* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 1999), 1.

²³ Bartlett and Bestul, *Cultures of Piety* (see note 22), 2.

One such example of the emphasis on Christ's passion begins Book XII of *The Revelations of Divine Love* (1393) by the anchoress Julian of Norwich (ca. 1342–1416).

"The Love that made Him to suffer passeth so far all His Pains as Heaven is above Earth" THEN said our good Lord Jesus Christ: *Art thou well pleased that I suffered for thee?* I said: *Yea, good Lord, I thank Thee; Yea, good Lord, blessed mayst Thou be.* Then said Jesus, our kind Lord: *If thou art pleased, I am pleased: it is a joy, a bliss, an endless satisfying to me that ever suffered I Passion for thee; and if I might suffer more, I would suffer more.*²⁴

Here the personal intimacy with God is achieved by a dialogue in which Julian and Christ engage in conversation specifically about his suffering, with which she and other petitioners could identify. She continues her discourse, finally revealing the sight of Christ's passion which overcomes the devil:

And after this I fell into a graveness, and said: I see three things: I see game, scorn, and earnest. I see [a] game, in that the Fiend is overcome; I see scorn, in that God scorneth him, and he shall be scorned; and I see earnest, in that he is overcome by the blissful Passion and Death of our Lord Jesus Christ that was done in full earnest and with sober travail.²⁵

Julian's absorption in the physical body and passion of Christ is typical of the post-plague obsession in which the petitioner is moved to sympathy for the suffering Christ and all those who have suffered in the past. Like Birgitta of Sweden (1303–73; *Revelations*, 1347),²⁶ Catherine of Siena (1347–1380),²⁷ Walter Hilton (1340–1396) *The Scale of Perfection*,²⁸ and other mystics of the fourteenth century, Julian and Margery Kempe (ca. 1373–1438) are engrossed in the pity and anguish of the time, and amply display their compassion for the suffering Christ. Another manifestation of this phenomenon is noted by George R. Keiser, who claims

²⁴ Julian of Norwich, *Revelation of Divine Love Recorded by Julian, Anchoress at Norwich in 1373*, trans. Grace Warrack (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh, 1901), 46.

²⁵ Julian of Norwich, *Revelation* (see note 24), 63.

²⁶ Birgitta of Sweden. *Revelations of St. Birgitta*, ed. Bridget Morris, trans. Denis Searby (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

²⁷ Catherine of Siena, *Drawn by Love: the Mysticism of Catherine of Siena, 1347–1380*, Marie Therese Hanna (Texas Borderlands: Sor Juana Press, 2010).

²⁸ Hilton, Walter, *The Scale of Perfection*, ed. Thomas H. Bestul. TEAMS Medieval English Text Series (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2000).

we can be confident that long before Chaucer composed his pathetic tales, writers of devotional literature—Richard Rolle (1300–1349; *Fire of Love*, 1349)²⁹ being the most obvious English example—made ample use of rhetorical figures for the purpose of moving a mediator to pathos and, consequently to virtuous living.³⁰

Such fixations on pathos and the passion of Christ are displayed in descriptive religious prayers, processions, devotional practices based on the Passion, writings, statuary, sermons, and religious artifacts.

One of those manifestations of excessive emotionality and its consequent actions is the impetus toward flagellation and other forms of self-immolation. Jean Elliot Johnson and Donald James Johnson speculate about the causes this way:

God is just, so He must be punishing us for our sins, some Christians reasoned, and they began stabbing themselves with spikes and beating themselves with clubs. Sometimes hundreds of these “flagellants” traveled from town to town wounding themselves as they went. One witness explained, “They scourged ... themselves with whips of hard knotted leather with little iron spikes. Some made themselves bleed very badly And some foolish women had cloths ready to catch the blood and smear it on their eyes, saying it was miraculous blood.”³¹

This type of behavior reflects just how much the anguish of the Black Death influenced the laity’s emotional empathy toward Christ. Further, Aron Ja. Gurevich adds that “The urban governing class also took part in the mass demonstrations of penitence and the waves of frenetic piety and fanaticism, accompanied by public processions of flagellants, that suddenly spread throughout Europe.”³² The hyperbolic emotional state motivated by the excruciating pain of the plague was widespread as well as extreme.

Even more outrageous and irrational was the reaction Christians felt toward non-Christians whom they blamed for the epidemic. Johnson and Johnson again explain the likely view at the time:

Perhaps God is angry at nonbelievers, some Christians argued, and they singled out Jews as the culprit: as a result anti-Semitism swept through Europe along with the disease. Christians accused Jews of poisoning the water supply and practicing witchcraft. At least sixty Jewish communities were destroyed in Germany. Angry mobs murdered the entire Jewish

²⁹ Richard Rolle, *The Fire of Love*, trans. Clifton Wolters (London: Penguin Classics, 1995).

³⁰ George R. Keiser, “The Middle English *Planctus Mariae* and the Rhetoric of Pathos,” *The Popular Literature of Medieval England*, ed. Thomas J. Heffernan. Tennessee Studies in Literature, 28 (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1985), 167–93; here 176.

³¹ Johnson and Johnson, *The Human Drama* (see note 3), 300.

³² Aron Ja. Gurevich, “The Merchant” (see note 10), 275.

community in Mainz. Pope Clement VI issued two bulls (laws) against the plunder and slaughter of Jews, but the butchery continued. In Strasbourg in 1349 more than a thousand Jews were burned in the town square; another thousand were spared because they accepted baptism. One observer speculated that money was the reason Jews were killed. "If they had been poor, and if the feudal lords had not been in debt to them, they would not have been burnt." Once the creditor was dead, the debts were canceled.³³

This later extreme reaction coincides with the hyperbolic emotional state of those experiencing numerous deaths of close relatives and friends from 1349 onward. In describing "The Privy of the Passion," Denise N. Baker further notes attributes of affective piety within personal meditation:

to aid the meditator in that process of visualization, the Middle English translator follows John of Caulibus in using vivid and evocative language. Christ's scourging, for example, is described with concrete imagery and precise details. "He was beaten and beaten again, blister upon blister and wound upon wound, until both the beaters and the spectators were weary."³⁴

Thus, graphic evocation of suffering and pain has been spurred on by the freeing of emotional feelings in the hearts of the laity resulting from the trauma of the Black Death. Two other means of engaging the meditator are seeing the anguish in direct connection to that meditating person, or to the victim such as Christ being beaten; and secondly, through "a series of questions to the historical persons who are the subject of the meditation about the cruelty and audacity of the tormentors ... as though [Christ] were present."³⁵ Again, the emotionality of the situation is transferred to the meditator and the audience.

After the torturous experience of witnessing mass deaths, society underwent a psychological need for intimacy and protection in the face of such adversity. Personal connection such as interaction with the deity or saints was a reassuring presence amidst the trauma of widespread sickness and death. Margery Kempe displays a desire for atonement and intimacy in the new-found emotionalism of the *Zeitgeist* in her biographical writings; she recalls "that on several occasions she confessed the sins of her whole life from childhood to the present—Margery opens her Book with the madness and spiritual crisis that followed the birth

³³ Johnson and Johnson, *The Human Drama* (see note 3), 300.

³⁴ Denise N. Baker, "The Privy of the Passion," *Cultures of Piety* (see note 22), 85–106; here 88.

³⁵ Baker, "Privy of the Passions" (see note 34), 89.

of her first child.”³⁶ Her apparitions now begin, the first vision of Christ, followed by

her frequent sobbing and weeping, and her continual thinking and talking of heaven. At this stage too, she records how our Lord enters into conversation with her during her meditations—conversations that are to continue through the Book—and how she imagines herself present at the birth of both the Virgin and of Christ, and bustles about giving a helping hand with practical housewifery In a series of Passion meditations Margery imagines herself present at the events of the first Easter from the betrayal of Christ through to the Resurrection ... not only present but actively involved as the busy and solicitous helper and handmaid of the Virgin.³⁷

Both the personal dimension and strong emotional tenor mark a new response to religious experience. Bartlett and Bestul note that “While devotional texts often reinforce the controlling belief systems of a society, they could also be sites of resistance to prevailing norms. In the later Middle Ages this was particularly true of visionary and mystical texts, often those written by women”³⁸ as we have just seen.

Further evidence of the traumatic effects of the Black Death can be found in a very different segment of society, and from different angles, namely in the 1354 Anglo-Norman *Le Livre de Seyntz Medicines* by John of Gaunt’s father-in-law Henry of Lancaster. Directed to the French-speaking nobility, educated clergy, and upper bourgeoisie, this work asks readers to seek forgiveness for trespasses against God which might account for social evils of the Black Death. As M. Teresa Tavormina points out, John Capgrave (1393–1464) reports that Henry

composed a devout book in a time of his sickness, the title of which is “Mercy, Gramercy” [e. g., “Mercy, Thanks”]. In this book [Part I of *Le Livre de Seyntz Medicines*], as it were in a small work of confession he called to mind all his deeds, seeking God’s grace for those things that were ill-done.³⁹

This reinforces the concept that many citizens believed the Black Death was a punishment from God for their trespasses. Even more to the point, his exposé of contrition is physically graphic, a manifestation of affective piety, the emotional tenor surrounding the Black Death. Henry sees his sins as

³⁶ *The Book of Margery Kempe*, trans. B. A. Windeatt (1985; London, New York, et al.: Penguin Books, 1994), 10–11.

³⁷ *The Book of Margery Kempe* (see note 36), 11, 14.

³⁸ Bartlett and Bestul, *Cultures of Piety* (see note 22), 14.

³⁹ M. Teresa Tavormina, “The Book of Holy Medicines,” *Cultures of Piety* (see note 22), 19–40; here 21.

seven great wounds or sores in his sensory organs, limbs, and heart. The first half of the book thus serves as an anatomy of sin, a metaphor that Henry himself uses, praying that he might be laid open before the Lord just as the bodies of executed criminals are dissected by physicians at Montpelier. He reveals that he is wounded in ears, eyes, nose, and mouth, in his hands and feet, and in his heart; each of the seven sins has entered the castle of his heart by way of these seven wounds. He gives extensive description of how he has sinned through each of these limbs and organs, with details that provide much information about contemporary aristocratic life.⁴⁰

Another manifestation of the Black Death on ecclesiastical practice is the impassioned conversations in letters and the degree of devoted praying and processions to deal with the horrific losses. Rosemary Horrox reports that on December 28, 1349, Archbishop of Canterbury Simon Islip wrote to the Bishop of London expressing the following sentiments:

When we recall the amazing pestilence which lately attacked these parts and which took from us by far the best and worthiest men, those of us who have survived and have been mercifully spared by Providence ... must break forth in praises and devout expressions of gratitude ... Therefore we require and order you, our most loving brother in the Lord, and firmly urge you, to bring the king's victory and the remembrance of the pestilence to your people's notice so that everyone can ask for the safety of the realm with proper reverence ... order the seven penitential psalms and the litany to be specially recited twice every week ... and the usual processions around the churches and churchyards to be carried out on the same days, by which means the people, sincerely contemplating the past and present gifts of God, should be better able to serve and please him. And thus those of us who remain alive should pray for the good state of the world ... so that God having mercy on the prayers of the just, should turn away his anger.⁴¹

Clearly, the overblown nervous tone of anxiety, relief at being spared, penitential fervor, remedy-seeking in the psalms and litanies, gratitude for gifts, and continued fear for the state of the world indicate a frenetic desire to stop that "amazing pestilence." On a personal level, religious practices were utilized by the laity as well as the religious population.

For example, on July 15, 1375, Simon Sudbury also wrote a letter requesting penitential processions and prayers, including the following excerpts:

Would those who profess themselves zealous for peace, who give their attention to the mortality, pestilence or epidemic now reigning in England ... be persuaded to pour out unceasing prayers to the most high for the cessation of this pestilence or epidemic But in our

⁴⁰ Tavormina, "Holy Medicines" (see note 39), 22.

⁴¹ Rosemary Horrox, trans. and ed., *The Black Death* (Manchester and New York: University of Manchester Press, 1994), 118–19.

modern times, alas, we are mired in monstrous sin and the lack of devotion among the people provokes the anger of the great king to whom we should direct our prayers. As a result we are assailed by plagues and epidemics, by the horror of war, the unhealthiness of the air, the scarcity of crops and the diminishing of livestock all of which leaves us more than usually bewildered and depressed.⁴²

In religion, the hair shirt, self-flagellation, and affective piety movements likewise revealed new instances of the sorrows carved from Christ's agony, his Mother's passion, and martyrs' suffering for Christ.

Interestingly, while some victims were more closely drawn to religious practices, on occasion the opposite result also occurred. Johnson and Johnson note that

The plague caused some Christians to question the teachings of the Church and turn to other sources of meaning. As religious skepticism deepened, various humanistic movements developed that began to produce art and literature that focused on more worldly activities.⁴³

Perhaps the excessive emotionalism of the affective piety movement was at bottom thought to be irrational and was thus repudiated on those grounds; or perhaps the heavy emotionalism simply proved too great a burden to bear over time, causing rejection and denial. Overall, however, Norman F. Cantor concludes:

Spiritually and intellectually, the century after the Black Death in England and elsewhere in Northern Europe was marked by the rise of intense personal mysticism and separately by a privatist kind of bourgeois behavior in elaborate spiritual exercises.⁴⁴

Undoubtedly, this emotional impetus explored in various strains of popular and aristocratic medieval religious practices and writings furthered the advancing Renaissance with its humanistic emphasis, as well as the earlier Death-centered devotions and art in the Late Middle Ages to a great degree.

II. Secular Literature: Narrative

Writers such as Petrarch (1304–1370), Boccaccio (1313–1375), Chaucer (1340–1400), and Langland (ca.1332–ca.1400), soon joined the band of death-obsessed

⁴² Rosemary Horrox, *The Black Death* (see note 41), 120.

⁴³ Johnson and Johnson, *The Human Drama* (see note 3), 301.

⁴⁴ Norman F. Cantor, *In the Wake of the Plague* (see note 6), 204.

survivors, producing a fanatical, but also amazing, flowering of the many testimonies to death's power. These wide-ranging backgrounds need further investigation and connection to each other. Many of these European authors have captured the terrors and despair, and even the quest to survive, surrounding the havoc of the Black Death. As Mariateresa Fumagalli Beonio Brocchieri points out,

Melancholy took on other hues in the pages of Petrarch. It was a new attitude combining depression with "a certain voluptuousness in sorrow" and a preference for solitude. It was a way of feeling and of being that reflected certain modes of the medieval intellectual, but anticipated others typical of the man of letters and the philosopher of the early modern period.⁴⁵

Evidence of this depression can be found in Petrarch's Sonnet 134, translated by Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503–1542); here the themes of frustration and anguish control the poem without actually mentioning the plague's great devastation of life:

I find no peace and all my war is done,
 I fear and hope, I burn and freeze like ice;
 I fly above the wind yet can I not arise;
 And naught I have, and all the world I season [sized upon]
 That looseth nor locketh holdeth me in prison
 And holdeth me not, yet can I 'scape no wise,
 Nor letteth me live nor die at my device,
 And yet of death it giveth none occasion.
 Without eyen I see and without tongue I plain [complain];
 I desire to perish, and yet I ask health;
 I love another, and thus I hate myself;
 I feed me in sorrow and laugh in all my pain;
 Likewise displeaseth me both death and life;
 And my delight is causer of this strife.⁴⁶

The contradictory and depressing state of life at this time, resulting from the social situation created by the Black Death, are persistently enforced. Such sentiments are conveyed by poets and novelists such as Petrarch (1304–1370) to those in the literate and aristocratic social classes.

⁴⁵ Mariateresa Fumagalli Beonio Brocchieri, "The Intellectual," *The Medieval World*, ed. Jacques Le Goff, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (New York: Collins and Brown, Ltd, 1990; London: Parkgate Books, 1997), 180–209; here 205.

⁴⁶ *The Broadview Anthology of British Literature*, Concise Edition, Volume A, Second edition, ed. Joseph Black et al. (2011; Buffalo, NY: Broadview Press, 2014), 547.

According to Aron Ja. Gurevich “In the preface to his *novelle* Franco Sacchetti⁴⁷ writes openly that people wanted to hear stories that brought them ease and consolation amid so many disasters, the plague, and death.”⁴⁸ Giovanni Boccaccio recognized this need, and in his Preface to the *Decameron* (ca. 1350–1351) offers one of the most fulsome literary depictions of the plague culture of the upper classes. According to S. H. Rigby, this would have been a legitimate concern, for:

Certainly, the high levels of plague mortality amongst the English upper classes in the fourteenth century, who had been untouched by the “Malthusian” mortality of the early century, and the virulence of the plague amongst the relatively prosperous inhabitants of fifteenth-century England, suggest that the impact of plague was not determined by living standards or by levels of rent.⁴⁹

Based on fear of the Black Death’s intrusive infection threatening ten young noble lords and ladies, and their consequent retreat to the unpopulated suburbs of Florence, it reveals the nature of the crisis and their attempt to escape Death’s mighty hand. There, in relative isolation, each escapee relates ten tales to entertain the others while the ravages of the plague continue harrowing the crowded city. Boccaccio’s detailed description of the disease and its consequences, both historical and literary, is most illuminating:

The city had been cleaned of much filth by officials delegated to the task. Sick persons were forbidden entrance, and many laws were passed for the safeguarding of health. Devout persons made to God not just modest supplications and not just once, but many, both in ordered processions and in other ways. Almost at the spring of that year, the plague horribly began to reveal, in astounding fashion, its painful effects ...

But in its early stages both men, and women too, acquired certain swellings either in the groin or under the armpits. Some of these swellings, either in the groin or under the armpits. Some of these swellings reached the size of a common apple ... The common people called them plague boils. From these two parts of the body, the deadly swellings began in a short time to appear and to reach indifferently every part of the body. Then the appearance of the disease began to change into black or livid blotches, which showed up in many on the arms or thighs, and in every other part of the body. On some they were large and few, on others small and numerous. And just as the swellings had been at first and still were an

⁴⁷ Franco Sacchetti, *Tales from Sacchetti*, trans. Mary C. Steegmann (London: Dent & Co., 1908).

⁴⁸ Aron Ja. Gurevich, “The Merchant” (see note 10), 274.

⁴⁹ Rigby, *English Society* (see note 4), 137.

infallible indication of approaching death, so also were these blotches to whomever they touched.⁵⁰

Here the physical reality proves and justifies the social panic experienced by Europeans across the social spectrum. Neither doctors nor medicines were of any avail, for no one knew the cause or cure. Even the healthy were vulnerable, few recovered, and most died by the third day. It was so contagious that “even to handle the clothing or other things touched or used by the sick seem to carry with it that same disease for those who came into contact with them.”⁵¹ With great amazement, Boccaccio reports the contagion in other species as well:

If an animal outside the human species contacted the belongings of a man sick or dead of this illness, it not only caught the disease, but within a brief time was killed by it. My own eyes ... saw one day (and other times besides) this occurrence. The rags of a poor man dead from this disease had been thrown in a public street. Two pigs came to them and they, in their accustomed manner, first rooted among them with their snouts, and then seized them with their teeth and tossed them about with their jaws. A short hour later, after some staggering, as if the poison was taking effect, both of them fell dead to earth upon the rags which they had unhappily dragged.⁵²

The social and ethical consequences of this virulent malady included a withdrawal by otherwise compassionate people who now fearfully ignored those who displayed the contagion. No doubt over time these frightened people would come to feel guilty, enhancing their meditation and prayers, seeking forgiveness for being so callous as to neglect family and loved ones. If everyone fled those with the disease, no one was available to care for the victims. As Boccaccio indicates,

for the enormous number of men and women who became ill, there was no aid except the charity of friends, who were few indeed From this abandonment of the sick by neighbors, relatives and friends and from the scarcity of servants arose a most unheard-of custom. Once she became ill, no woman, however attractive, lovely, or well-born, minded having as her servant a man, young or old. To him without any shame she exhibited any part of her body as sickness required, as if to another woman. This explains why those who were cured were less modest than formerly. A further consequence is that many died for want of help who might still be living. The fact that the ill could not avail themselves of services as

50 Giovanni Boccaccio, *Il Decameron*, ed. Luigi Russo, trans. David and Patricia Herlihy (Florence: Sansoni, 1939). Quoted in *Medieval Culture and Society*, ed. David Herlihy (New York, Hagerstown, et al.: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1968), 351–58; here 352–53.

51 Boccaccio, *Decameron* (see note 50), 353.

52 Boccaccio, *Decameron* (see note 50), 353–54.

well as the virulence of the plague account for the multitude who died in the city by day and by night.⁵³

Even the method of burial was radically altered at this time of devastation. Whereas previously relatives and neighbors would mourn outside the house of the deceased, awaiting the priest to arrive with pomp, and would chant with candles and bear him on their shoulders to the Church, now such customs disappeared. No one wanted to be involved with such pestilence. Many an ill victim:

Instead of dying amidst a crowd of women ... left this life without a single witness. Indeed, few were conceded the mournful wails and bitter tears of loved ones Few bodies had more than ten or twelve neighbors to accompany them to church, and even those were not upright citizens, but a species of vulture sprung from the lowly who called themselves "grave-diggers," and sold their services. ... Ahead were four or six clerics with little light or sometimes none, who with the help of the grave diggers placed the dead in the nearest open grave without straining themselves with too long or solemn a service.⁵⁴

Such callous behavior would inevitably bring concern and guilt to those who rejected their dying relatives, which ultimately generated more emotional grief within the social structure.

Geoffrey Chaucer, sharing the same socio-literary milieu as Boccaccio, was also acutely aware of the physical reality of the Black Death still affecting his country and era. As Robert R. Edwards points out, "The present consensus is that the *Decameron* returned [from Europe] with Chaucer as a literary model, as an idea for a framed collection of stories grounded in an experience of the contemporary world."⁵⁵ That experience included the Black Death. The premise behind Chaucer's Canterbury pilgrimage is that grateful souls, spared from the misery of the plague and its often inevitable consequence, regularly offered thanks for being spared by pilgrimaging to a hallowed site, such as the shrine of St. Thomas à Becket. The "Pardoner's Tale" even uses the Black Death as its backdrop, as did Ingmar Bergman's much later in his 1957 film "The Seventh Seal" and the 1988 film "The Navigator: A Medieval Odyssey."

Chaucer's tale begins with an emotionally extreme situation in which three rioters are placed within a socially deviant context of gambling, gluttony, drunkenness and debauchery, in a twenty-four-hour bar associated with brothels and

⁵³ Boccaccio, *Decameron* (see note 50), 355–56.

⁵⁴ Boccaccio, *Decameron* (see note 50), 356.

⁵⁵ Robert R. Edwards, "Italy," *Chaucer: Contemporary Approaches*, ed Susanna Fein and David Raybin (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 3–24; here 9.

low-life scoundrels. These three out-of-control, intoxicated young men hear the Death-Toll and learn of their friend's demise from the Black Death who "hath a thousand slayn this pestilence."⁵⁶ They are cautioned "For to be war of swich an adversarie" (682). The taverner concurs, warning "he hath slayn this yeer / henne over a mile, withinne a gret village, / Bothe male and womman, child and hyne, and page" (V. 686–88).

The rioters become angry and aggressive. Although they are not contaminated, yet Death will nevertheless get them. They immediately conspire to take revenge upon the source of their friend's passing, and kill Death himself. As they set out on their journey to seek Death, they swear brotherhood, to live and die for each other, and to kill that false traitor Death. Soon they meet a poor Old Man whose Old Age makes him desire respite from his pain in Death. But he claims Death has refused him.

When the young rioters ask where to find Death, he points them this way, through a grove, and under a tree. Here they come upon a pile of gold and think themselves waylaid, when, in fact, greed for this treasure ensures Death will take the lives of all three of them. As two wait for darkness to move their newfound gold, a third goes to town for bread and wine, for an unholy mass. The two conspire to kill the last, while the last poisons the wine for his "friends." After the two kill the third, they consume the poisoned wine and expire. Obviously the personified Death cannot be controlled, and the plague cannot be overcome by mankind, however much and in whatever ways humanity is afflicted. Ultimately the rioters meet their deaths for their greed and the audacity of trying to kill Death. The emotion resulting from the Black Death here is not empathetic.

The exceptionally popular *Piers Plowman* by William Langland displays the influence of the plague within its allegorical context by referring to it as the source of social disorder. For example, Prologue, Version A, reads:

Persones and parisch prestes . playneth to heore bisschops
That heore parisch hath be pore . seththe the pestilence tyme,
And asketh leue and lycence . at London to dwelle,
To singe ther for simonye . for seluer is swete. (80–83)⁵⁷

Here, lay people and priests beg to come to London to get money for they are all poor since the plague. This economic need is another result of the devastating

⁵⁶ *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson (Boston: Macmillan, 1987), VI, 679. Subsequent Chaucer quotations will be taken from this volume.

⁵⁷ Langland's *Piers the Plowman and Richard the Redeless*, ed. Walter W. Skeat, Vol. 1: *Text* (1886, 1924; Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1969), 9.

plague. Further, in an attempt to understand the cause of the pestilences, Reason claims it is God's punishment for sin in Passus V, Version A:

He preide the peple . haue pite of hem-selue,
 And preuede that this pestilences . weore for puire synne,
 And this south-westerne wynt . on a Seterday at euen
 Was a-perteliche for pruide . and for no poynt elles.
 Puries and plomtres . weore passchet to the grounde,
 In ensaumple to men. That we scholde do the better (p. 123, 12–17)

In fact, many religious advocates linked human behavior to the cause of the plague, engineered by God as punishment for sin and disobedience. As Morton Bloomfield points out, even Mother Nature and the weather are undone by these pestilences:

In V, 13 ff. Reason begins his sermons by referring to the recent pestilences (which had devastated England in 1349, 1361–62, 1369, 1375–76) and above all to “the southwest wynde on Saterdag at euene,” all of which were, Reason assures us, due to the sin of pride ... A more general statement about the matter [of the Apocalypse] occurs in Anima's speech in XV, 348 ff. Things are so bad now that the weather and sky have all the ‘experts’ at their wits’ end.

- Astrymyanes also . aren at her wittes ende;
- Of that was calculated of the element [air].
- The contrairie thei fynde (XV, 363–66)⁵⁸

Thus, Langland likewise assumes the source of the plague can be found in man's pride and other vices, which means if man's behavior changes, so will the curses from God. Byron Lee Grigsby takes a more didactic view of Langland's literary strategy, that

Just as plague affected his society, so does plague affect his literary characters. In both Passus VIII and XXII of the C-Text, Langland provides us with the central relationship between sin and plague. Plague symbolizes and corrects a morally corrupt society. Langland employs plague whenever the characters reach a moral impasse. In Passus VIII, Piers pleads for Hunger to attack the Fair Field of Folk because they will not work. After Hunger attacks and the workers repent, the narrator prophesies that if the workers do not labor, Hunger will come again and through “pruyde and pestilence shal muche Peple teche (349).⁵⁹

58 Morton W. Bloomfield, *Piers Plowman as a Fourteenth-Century Apocalypse* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1961), 114.

59 Byron Lee Grigsby, *Pestilence in Medieval and Early Modern English Literature* (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), 103–04.

Despite this didactic dimension, the use of pestilence is still emotional, if punitive, and clearly affects the social situation of society after that time of anguish. The widespread proliferation of such plague literature has spread across Europe, maintaining a grip on the consciousness of its readers and audiences, thus revealing the content and effects of such a severe pandemic. Its impact was likely somewhat more extensive than local religious practices relegated to small groups of parishioner.

III. Literature: Drama – Mystery Plays

Yet another venue for the expression of emotional piety can be found in the medieval mystery and morality plays following the traumatic medical upheaval experienced by the populace. These Corpus Christi processions and festivals propagated intense emotionality across the countryside. Although the genre may be different, according to Stanley J. Kahrl, the audience was inclusive: “Close study of the surviving records of dramatic activity in a county like Lincolnshire, however, soon demonstrates that it was not just the nobility who traveled to see the plays.”⁶⁰

The content of many religious Corpus Christi plays displays an emotional tenor not dissimilar from that following the Black Death experience. For example, Kahrl continues:

... the Brome *Abraham and Isaac* is marked by its heavy pathos and its emphasis on the agony Abraham suffers as his son, Isaac, pleads to be spared [T]he actual physical violence is carried out by ordinary people, the soldiers who are supporting the status quo, blood brothers of Herod’s minions who perpetrate the slaughter of the Innocents, or the soldier-carpenters who nail Christ to the Cross ⁶¹

The N-Town Play of *Abraham and Isaac* is emotionally evocative and draws the reader into the biblical situation of a father torn between the love of his son and the love of his God. Abraham begins the play indicating his background and his tender emotional feeling for his son, born in his old age:

In myn olde age a chylde full bolde—
Ysaac, lo, here his name is tolde.
My swete sone that stondyth me by,

⁶⁰ Stanley J. Kahrl, “Secular Life and Popular Piety in Medieval English Drama,” *The Popular Literature of Medieval England* (see note 30), 85–107; here 91.

⁶¹ Kahrl, “Secular Life” (see note 60), 93, 103.

Amongys all chyldeyn that walkyn on wolde,
A lovelyer chylde is non trewly. (12–16)⁶²

He thanks God for his mercy, grace, and this gift of his “suete chylde” (19), acknowledging to Isaac that “Ful hertyly do I love thee” (22). Isaac feels equally tender, willingly gives his father the requested kiss, and asks for Abraham’s blessing. His father responds with an injunction to love, serve, and please God his Creator, and he will be rewarded. The gentle tone and affection between the two is palpable. When Abraham says he must walk alone, Isaac wishes God keep him on his journey. Abraham’s prayer to God is centered on Isaac for “Ther may no man love bettyr his childe / Than Isaac lovyd of me” (57–58) whom he begs God to save.

When the Angel arrives to tell Abraham

Ysaac, thi sone, anon thou take
And loke hym thou slee anon, lete se,
And sacrifice to God hym make.
Thy wel beloved childe thou must now kyll. (78–81)

Poor Abraham, and by extension, the audience, is emotionally caught between his love for his son and his commitment to obey God. We see him agree to obey, but then sorrowfully cry out “But yitt the fadyr to scle the sone? ... In byt-tyr bale now am I brought” (91, 93). His mind tells him his sorrow is nothing, but his heart is crushed: “With evy [heavy] hert I walke and wende” (97). As he mulls over the situation, he concludes

Now must the fadyr his suete son schende!
Alas, for ruthe, it is pété!
My swete sone, come hedyr to me! (99–101)

The naive Isaac willingly goes with his beloved father, “And at youre bydding I am yow by” (106), acknowledging the child’s need to obey. When Abraham gives Isaac the sticks and fire, he bemoans that “Ther may no man that levyth in londe / Have more sorwe than I have wo” (119–20). The curious Isaac asks why Abraham is so quiet, and where the sacrificed animal is before Abraham says God will provide. The audience can only be horrified and sorrowful at Abra-

⁶² “Abraham and Isaac,” *The N-Town Plays*, Play 5, ed. Douglas Sugano, University of Rochester Teams Medieval English Texts Series, <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/sugano-n-town-plays-play-5-abraham-and-isaac>. Future quotations of this play are from this edition (last accessed on Dec. 5, 2014.)

ham's plight, his unresolvable dilemma. Even Isaac is sorrowful at his father's demeanor, not knowing the cause, as he says:

Lat be, good fadyr, youre sad wepynge!
Your hevy cher agrevyth me sore!
Tell me, fadyr, youre grett mornynge,
And I shal seke sum help therfore. (133–36)

The emphasis is on sorrow, pity, emotional involvement, and audience empathy for both characters which were strengthened and increased during the era of the plague. Eventually, Abraham must tell Isaac he is the sacrifice, and the meek son's acceptance makes the audience even more sympathetic to such a noble boy, heightening the tragedy. He heroically says his father should be happy to do God's will, even if he is the victim. Since he should be damned if he disobeyed, Isaac says "With your swerd my deth ye make" (159). Abraham agrees he must,"But yit the fadyr to sle the sone- / My hert doth clynge and cleve as clay" (163–64). The emotion is escalated when Isaac says, do it, but turn away your face when you smite off my head. Poor Abraham responds:

My dere derlyng, now must me lese,
Myn owyn sybb blood now shal I spylle!
Yitt this dede, or I fulfille,
My swete sone, this mouth I kys. (171–74)

Such open expression of feelings was fostered by the calamitous era of the Black Death when emotions were so stirred due to the provocative incidents of widespread suffering and death. The distraught Abraham provides a kerchief to cover Isaac's face at the slaying to protect them both from the agony of death, and bemoans:

Thy lovely vesage wold I not se —
Not for all this werdlys good,
With this swerd that sore grevyth me
My childe I sle and spylle his blood. (181–84)

This fevered pitch of a climax is interrupted by the Angel who stops the slaughter in the nick of time. The palpable relief is summarized in Abraham's "I thank my God in heaven above" (193) and in his prayer:

This place I name with good entent
"The Hill of Godys Vesytacyon,"

For hedyr God hath to us sent
His comferte after grett trybulacyon. (205–08)

The Angel tells Abraham God will bless him for his willingness to obey, and Isaac offers a final emotional conclusion reminiscent of the tenor of the Black Death:

With lowly hert to God I crye.
I am his servant both day and nyght.
I thank thee, Lord, in hevyn so hyghe
With hert, with thought, with mayn, with myght. (237–40)

Medieval mystery and passion plays, especially the Crucifixion Plays utilize blood and gore in a sacred context that is no less emotionally startling. In the “York Play of the Crucifixion,” for example, four soldiers attempt to stretch the bleeding Christ onto a cross too large for his frame. Editors of *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* note that in this play, “The gory details, part of the play’s ‘realism,’ create a shudder”⁶³ that emotionally stirs the audience. Such engaging marks of affective piety mirror the emotional state of a continent ravaged by an all-consuming plague and the fatalities it wrought. Thus, the intense *York Crucifixion Play* exemplifies the affective piety movement evolved from the emotional era of the Black Death.

This passion play centering on the agony of Christ likewise engages the audience in the pitiful situation. The play begins with the first soldier encouraging his fellows to hurry along and do the deed since “lordis and leders of owre lawe / Has geven dome [judgment] that this doote [fool] shal dye He muste be dede nedelyngis [necessarily] by none [noon]” (4–5, 15).⁶⁴ The cruel soldiers discuss their plan to strike him down so Christ will not harm them with his noise, and they will build the cross so that “The fouest dede of all / Shalle he dye for his dedis ... But latte us haste hym for to hange ... [with] hammeres and nayles large and lange Commes on, late kille this traitoure strange [strong]” (21–22, 28, 30, 32).

⁶³ *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Eighth edition, vol. 1, ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al. (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 2006), 398.

⁶⁴ *Crucifixio Christi*, Play 35. *The York Corpus Christi Plays*, ed. Clifford Davidson. Middle English Text Series. Robbins Library Digital Projects (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester), 2011. Online at: <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/publication/davidson-the-york-corpus-christi-plays>. Future quotations of this play are from this edition (last accessed on Dec. 5, 2014.)

Each of these statements and injunctions is designed to stir the audience to fury at the soldiers' heartlessness and to pity for the abused victim. When the first soldier mentions to Christ that certainly he might fear, the second retorts that the soldiers must learn to chastise, not sympathize with such deceivers as the victim.

The soldiers continue their abuse because they believe that the "cursed knave" (45) must be punished, "flaied"; one says his fellow shall see that happen soon, raising the anticipation and anguish of the audience. Christ's response is a prayer: Lord Almighty, you bade that I should be obedient and atone for Adam's sin. I am here to save mankind from that sin and beg you to find favor because of me and let men defend themselves from the devil to save their souls. This generosity further stimulates the audience to support the altruistic victim, suffering for them. The second soldier calls him worse than mad for not dreading the doleful deed that will come to him and cannot imagine such compassion as Christ would offer. The third soldier claims he should have realized what his wicked works have wrought, and the fourth hopes he will cease inventing lies. The first soldier bitterly claims that for all his babbling, those words of Christ will sorely hurt him.

When another tells them all to stop talking and to begin acting, they are surprised to notice that "hymselffe has laid hym doune / In lenghe and breede as he schulde bee" (75–76). Such meekness they never expected. They contemplate what to do with him and decide that since "he claymeth kyngdome with croune / Evne as a kyng here hange schall bee" (79–80). Immediately, each soldier adopts a hand or leg into which he bore a hole for hanging. Soldier 4 concludes "This boy here in our baile [custody] / Shall bide [endure] ful bittir braide [torment]" (95–96). Clearly their intent is to inflict as much pain as possible, making the audience even more uncomfortable.

But the process goes amiss as one soldier reports "It fails a foote and more, / The senous [sinews] are so gone ynnne [contracted]" (107–08). Another responds "Than must he bide in [endure] bittir bale [misery]" (110). Another instructs them to stop complaining, fasten a cord, and tug him to the hole that has been bored into the cross, to attach him "top and taile ... Full suerly as a snayle" (114, 118). All these machinations the audience must endure, feeling compassion for the poor victim who likewise hears their conversation. The third soldier claims he will attach Christ full nimbly with a nail. The second soldier promises the nail he just hammered will hold "For nowe are feste faste [firmly fastened] both his handis" (122).

This slow process and narrative description prolong the victim's and audience's anguish. Let's see, soldier two claims, what jest might assuage his suffering? Clearly none. When soldier number four points out the job is misaligned and the

rope won't reach, but must be done again, soldier number one retorts that a rope can always be pulled to align Christ. As the remaining nails are driven in, the malicious soldiers continue to criticize and inflict extra pain to the pathetic Christ, whose sinews and veins are stretched to fit the mortise / nail holes.

Their next job is to raise the Christ-laden cross, at great pain to him, as they bump the cross about and bring it to the hilltop. One soldier even volunteers to tie the rope so that "The comforte of this karle [man] to kele [cool, diminish]" (134). His comrade insists "It is no force [matter] howe felle [horrible] he feeles" (136). Indeed they go out of their way to add to the excruciating anguish he is experiencing, one exclaiming "Yaa, assoundir are bothe synnous and veynis / On ilke a side, so have we soughte" (147–48). Another comments that if he were God, this would not be happening to him and a third says "The devill hym hang!" (188). The vindictive tone of the first soldier is infuriating to the audience:

Now raise hym nemely [nimble] for the nonys
And sette hym be thus mortas heere,
And latte hym falle in alle at ons
For certis that payne shall have no pere ...
This fallyng was more felle
Than all the harmes he hadde. (219–22, 225–26)

They then taunt him to speak, and he does so mysteriously, first saying: if any man pass by, pay attention to this suffering and feel it before you pass; and second, Father, forgive these men who give me pain for they do not know what they do; I desire their sins not be sought, but that their souls be saved. The soldiers rudely reply "he jangelis like a jay. / Methynk he patris [patters] like a py [magpie]" (265–66). They conclude because he claimed to be the son of God, he fell into this evil assault and was judged to die.

Further, although he claimed to rise after death, they believe he has no power to do so. The entire play represents disrespect and injury to Christ in order to stir the emotions of pity and contrition, sorrow and compassion so prevalent in the plague era. The fact that these plays have been performed for audiences over time and space indicates their influence on culture and society. However, Norman F. Cantor is right that "The Black Death provided an activating psychological context for privatization of late medieval religions. It did not create it."⁶⁵

65 Norman F. Cantor, *In the Wake of the Plague* (see note 6), 206.

IV. Literature: History – Chronicles

In addition many chroniclers of that period have detailed the phenomenon of the Black Death from various historic-perspectives, all of which have influenced both medieval and modern views of medicine and contagion. As Seraphine Guerchberg notes:

Chroniclers' descriptions leave no doubt that the symptoms were those of bubonic plague including those of the most deadly form of the disease: pneumonic. Moreover, a specialized medical literature on the subject grew up; this in itself was unusual. Professor Sudhoff, the German historian of medicine, has printed nearly 300 treatises on plague, of which close to twenty were written between 1348 and 1350, and the rest by 1500.⁶⁶

Most chroniclers, writing for the general public, and not the medical community, based their theory on an astrological source for the plague with their own modifications added, which the German cleric and science writer Konrad von Megenberg (1309–1374) criticized. He believed that “the plague moved along the great communication routes, hitting mainly towns, centers of pilgrimage, fairs, and so on, where crowds were attracted, and often sparing whole intermediate zones,”⁶⁷ oblivious to astrology. His Latin treatise *Utrum Mortalitas* concluded “that contamination of the air was the efficient cause of the plague.”⁶⁸ Other writers of the time were also concerned about contagion, including the illustrious Italian Gentile da Foligno, several of whose writings preceded the *Compendium de Epidemia* [by the Faculty of Medicine of Paris]; Johannes della Penna, who disputed with him on the physiological cause of the plague; and the great Arab physician Ibn-al-Khatib who paid for his convictions with his life, along with his less courageous friend Ibn Khatima, who after enunciating his theory of contagion, on the order of religious authorities immediately withdrew it.⁶⁹

Since scholastic philosophy was the basis for much science, issues of free will and determinism and God's punishment for sin were also considered potential causes of this epidemic. In any case, the multiple possible causes of the

⁶⁶ Seraphine Guerchberg, “The Controversy Over the Alleged Sowers of the Black Death in the Contemporary Treatises on Plague,” *Changes in Medieval Society: Europe North of the Alps 1050–1500*, ed. Sylvia L. Thrupp (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Meredith Publishing Co, 1964), 208–24; here 209.

⁶⁷ Guerchberg, “Controversy” (see note 66), 211.

⁶⁸ Guerchberg, “Controversy” (see note 66), 211.

⁶⁹ Guerchberg, “Controversy” (see note 66), 211.

Black Death and other contagions influenced perceptions of people at the time. As Guerchberg points out, measures of social hygiene may be said to date from the Black Death The *Compendium de Epidemia* advises that in the event of an epidemic sent by God we should pray humbly for grace; at the same time, since it is to God that we are indebted for medical science, we should still follow a doctor's orders.⁷⁰

Thus, society is being changed by the literature of the Black Death as issues of social hygiene are first instituted, as praying as a means to contend with the disease is suggested, and as following physicians' advice is now recommended and considered valid. In addition, the nature of poison, as having a mysterious power, was also seen as miraculous. Many felt it could act at a distance, or its action could be delayed. Moreover, it was felt that all poisoning depended for its efficacy on some element of magical procedure. In the face of these ideas, it is clear that no physician or savant of the time could really have challenged the assumption behind the accusations, namely that plague can be provoked at will by poisoning.⁷¹

Chroniclers of this disease, then, were affected by current attitudes about the causes of this epidemic and their concerns were part of the literature they produced, in Latin and in the vulgate. Their primarily literate audience would have been seriously affected by the facts and situations described. Perhaps the various literatures on the Black Death was somewhat more influential than the religious practices and prayers of local and even regional contributors.

V. Art: Painting and Woodcuts

After the Black Death had decimated Europe, a confluence of emotionally-charged art, particularly painting and woodcuts, burgeoned forth in which people's fears and anxieties were manifested. Across the continent, painters, sculptors, engravers, stained glass makers, and wood-cutters found themselves recreating that very death they so abhorred. Some chose to depict the sorrowful Christ or other anguished saint directly with whom the audience could commiserate.

The following description of images evidencing the obsession with emotion, and ultimately escape from it in the woodcuts, follows this pattern: first, the

⁷⁰ Guerchberg, "Controversy" (see note 66), 212–13. Blaming the Jews for the contagion would have been foolhardy, as many have noted, given the number of Jews killed by it. Nevertheless, this often happened, as evidenced by the pogroms and other irrational retributions.

⁷¹ Guerchberg, "Controversy" (see note 66), 215. See also pp. 215 ff. regarding views that the plague was part of a plot against Christendom.

most emotionally stirring works focusing on close-ups of the face of Christ, and thus revealing the affective piety of the era, are presented. The first three images closely engage the audience in Christ's anguish and humanity; those who have witnessed suffering and death in their own lives during the plague years would clearly be moved.

Secondly, the emphasis moves to more distanced face and body of Christ, often focusing on the crucifixion and brutality exerted against Him. Not just the passion found on His face, but also the broader view, as the audience is invited to see the cause of that anguish, is exhibited.

Thirdly, other witnesses within the depiction are revealed as being affected by the horror and loathsome treatment of this dying man. For those who had lost loved ones in the Black Death, it would have been easy to sympathize with both Christ and those who were present, tormented by witnessing His agony.

Fourthly, the description in this essay moves to woodcuts in which Death is dealt with in a distanced, humorous, or grotesque fashion to remove the viewer from the horror of death when it has become just too intense or prolonged decades or centuries later. No longer are these woodcuts focusing on the passion of Christ, but on the pull of Death on individuals, some of whom end up as skeletons themselves within the depiction.

The time-frame of these images extends beyond the Middle Ages, as do the effects of the Black Death, both of which penetrate into the Renaissance and beyond. The strong impact of images is thus recognized as an influential perpetrator of the plight of mankind long after individuals have personally endured the experience of the Black Death, itself a crippling disaster. The broadly based impact of the plague on culture and civilization, from religion, literature, art, economics, social status, to attitudes about death and dying cannot be overestimated.

El Greco's "Christ Carrying the Cross" (1580) (Fig. 1) presents a bleeding Christ with a painful-looking crown of thorns penetrating his skull. His face and neck are splattered with blood and his eyes look heavenward toward His Father. His serious expression reveals His awareness of the task carved out for him: the redemption of mankind through his suffering and death. His translucent hand holds the cross willingly as his pale skin shines out from the darkened page. The crosspiece of the crucifix is angled to correspond to the angle of Christ's glance heavenward. The graphic realism of this dramatic portraiture generates pity in the heart of the audience, and attests to the culture of death so prevalent since the Black Death era.

Another version of "Christ Carrying the Cross" by Niccolò Frangipane (1570's) (Fig. 2) offers a roped Christ with pathetic eyes looking downward. Equally accepting of the rope and the cross, symbols of his oppression, but

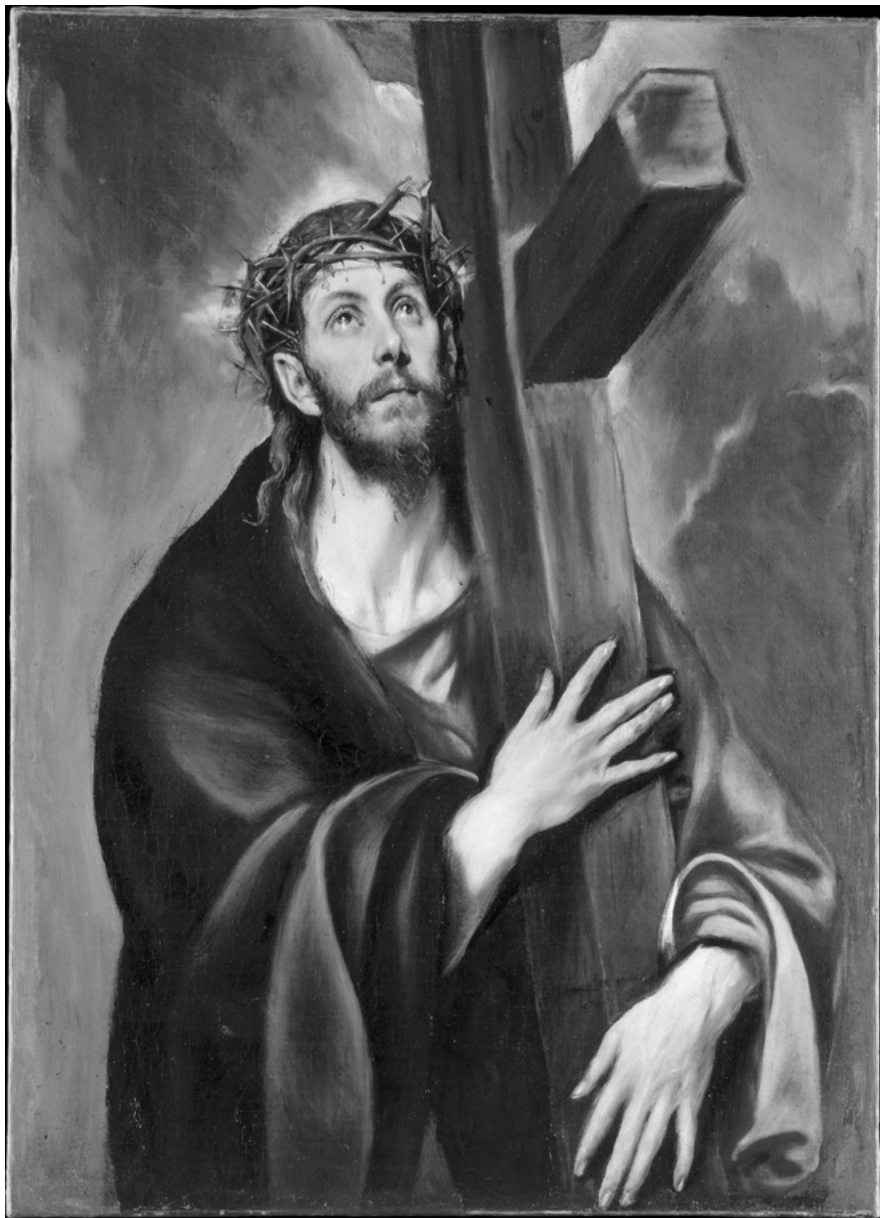


Fig. 1: El Greco's "Christ Carrying the Cross" (1580)

also man's salvation, this Christ appears resigned to his fate. His face, neck, and hand mystically emerge from the darkness with a glowing radiance. The large

and menacing thorns add to the aura of pain and cruelty. The down-tilting angle of His head suggests his sorrow, and inspires anguish and compassion from an audience still reacting to the horrors of death.

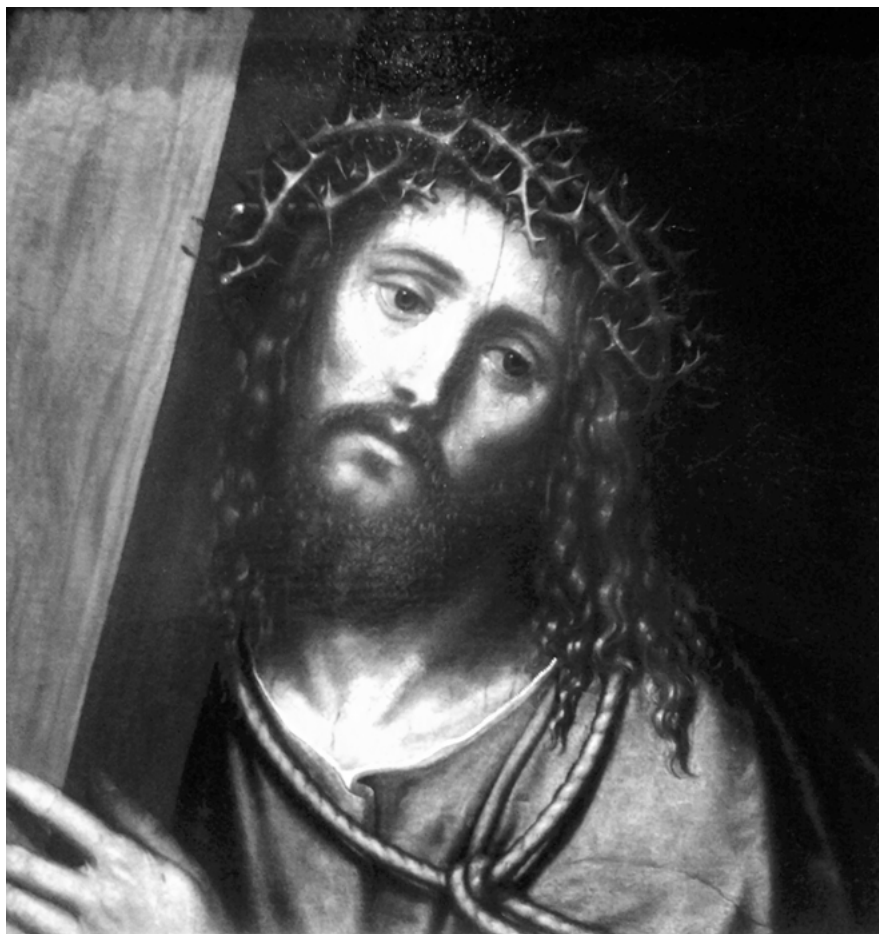


Fig. 2: Niccolo Frangipane's "Christ carrying the Cross" (1570's)

The anonymous German "Christ in the Crown of Thorns" (second half of the fifteenth century) (Fig. 3) shows deadly looking thorns causing Christ's agony, evident in his drooping eyes and mouth. A certain disorientation of His eyes and their swollen, puffy eyelids indicate the extend of his physical and psychological distress. Even the set of his mouth, crooked tooth, and facial hair near his mouth adds to the disorder of the portrait. In the background, menacing thorns encom-

pass Christ's head in a threatening frame across his skull and on to his forehead. This evocative piece might well stir its audience to emotional involvement typical of the realistic portrayals of suffering and death following the experience of the plague across Europe, and continuing to hold its audience in awe.

Peter Paul Rubens' "Flagellation of Christ" (1617) (Fig. 4) depicts his entire body being beaten by two thugs with a third standing by laughing. The sturdy legs and body, harshly whipping Christ with a knotted rope, indicate the power of the first assailant. Behind Christ, another attacker with his large foot planted on the back of the victim for ballast has raised his muscular arms to whip him with scourges. The intense look on his face indicates his serious strong desire to inflict serious injury. The third muscular onlooker smirks gleefully as he shades his eyes to better view the attack. A small engrossed dog looks upset as he watches the beating. Christ, centered between the beaters, emerges glowing amid their darker atmosphere. The scene presents the pain of one human being for whom any audience would feel compassion.

Hungarian Mateo Cerezo the Younger's disheveled Christ called "Ecce Homo" ["This is the Man"] (1665) (Fig. 5) is doubly tied—across his naked chest and across his hands. The vulnerability of Christ is highlighted in his unclad chest and arms and in his desolate glance of despair looking downward. He seems the more vulnerable, lacking even chest hair to protect Him, and the more boyish and unable to defend himself from the powers around him. His disheveled hair flying about His face and head counterbalance the fluidly arranged cape on his right arm and left side. His vulnerability inspires a compassionate protection in the audience disposed to such emotionality in their lives and in art-work since the Black Death.

Other painters chose to depict the suffering of bystanders at the crucifixion or passion, an example of commiseration of those at the scene and those now witnessing the portrayal. Pietro Lorenzetti's "Crucifixion" (1340's) (Fig. 6) reveals expressive naturalism in the swooning Virgin in vibrant blue about to fall but supported by her companions. In the background, a strong figure is about to break the legs of one of the thieves. Blood spurts from Christ and drips from the thief on the right. Three spears point upward at similar angles. Red, gold, and green garments on sympathetic figures on the viewers' left contrast the aggressive brown and white horses on the right. Male figures in the rear look up to the crucified man while female figures in the front look down to the Virgin. A light gold glow surrounds Christ in the upper center while a dark navy garment surrounds the Virgin in the lower left. Clearly the bystanders are emotionally involved in the action of this painting, the women sympathetic to the Virgin and the men hostile to Christ. Lorenzetti experienced the anguish of the plague directly, having died from the Black Death himself.

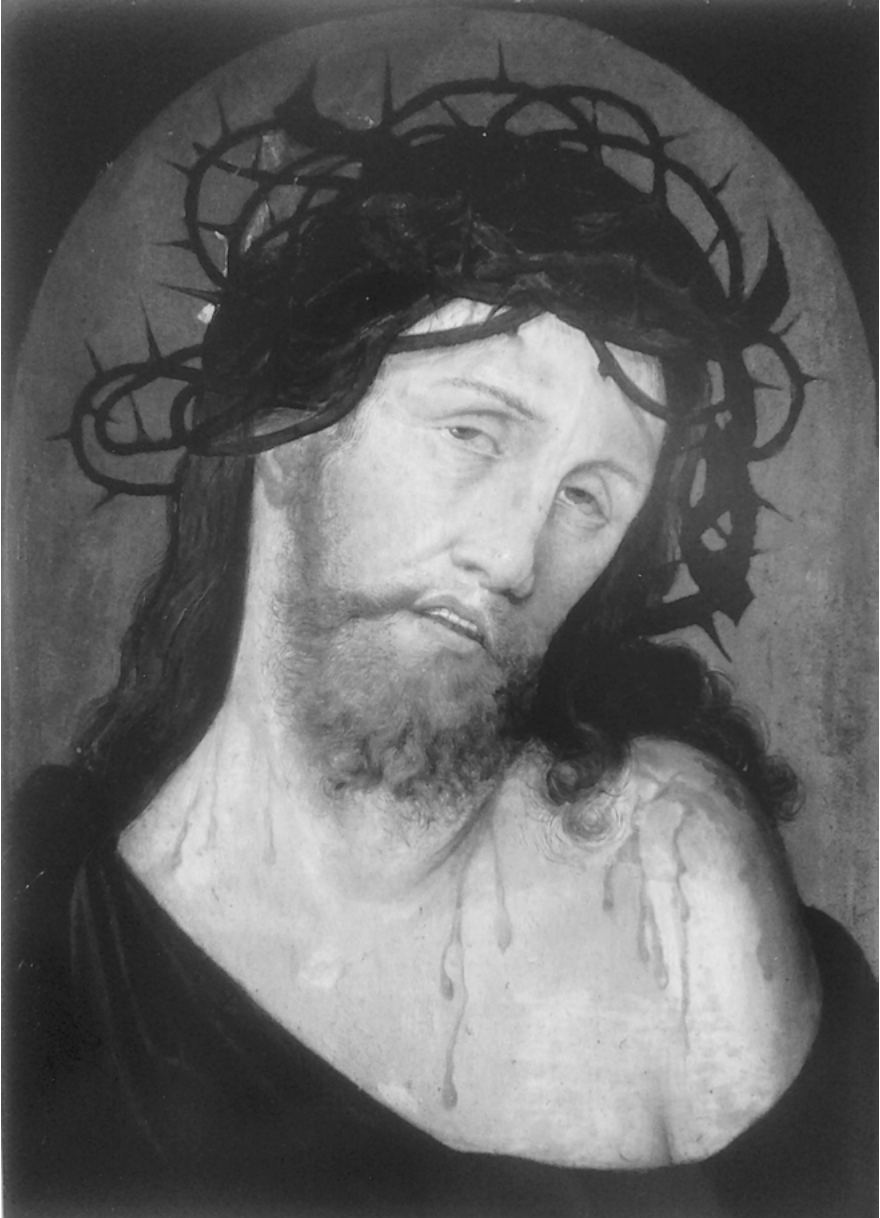


Fig. 3: The anonymous German "Christ in the Crown of Thorns" (second half of fifteenth cent.)



Fig. 4: Peter Paul Rubens' "Flagellation of Christ" (1617)

The Brussels artist Rogier van der Weyden's Crucifixion diptych "Descent from the Cross" (1435–1440) (Fig. 7) narratively reveals the removal of Christ's expired



Fig. 5: Mateo Cerezo the Younger's "Ecce Homo" (1665)

body as his Mother, in parallel posture below indicating her shared anguish, collapses in grief. Two companions attempt to hold the falling Mother: a woman holding her left arm and looking affectionately at her, and St. John holding



Fig. 6: Pietro Lorenzetti's "Crucifixion" (1340's)

her right arm and looking concerned. Behind them, a distraught woman wipes her eyes with her right hand. Joseph of Arimathea holding Christ's right arm looks sorrowful while Nicodemus with even more distressed, furrowed brow,

holds Christ's legs. Mary Magdalene's face and body, on the viewers' right, are contorted with grief. Thus the compassionate mourners on the viewers' left commiserate with the Virgin, while those on the viewers' right mourn for the Savior. A skull and bone marking the victory of death lie below the crucifix.



Fig. 7: Rogier van der Weyden's Crucifixion diptych "Descent from the Cross" (1435–1440)

Also, Rogier van der Weyden's diptych *The Crucifixion: "Christ on the Cross with the Virgin and St. John the Evangelist Mourning"* (1460) (Fig. 8) reveals the suffering Mary falling to the ground in agony, with St. John the Evangelist holding her up. Here on Mount Golgotha, the green surface of the land and the Virgin's pale blue garment extending to both sides of the diptych links the two sides, and the two sufferings. Further, both live characters in the first segment experience anguish and pain for the deceased Christ in the second segment. St. John's sorrowful tears fall from his eyes, angled at Christ in the next segment, just as the Virgin's sorrowful tears flow from her eyes, angled toward the skull in that next segment. These bones, representing death, are said to be those of Adam who was thought to be buried in Golgotha. The audience experiences pity for the crucified

Christ, but also for the sorrowing Virgin and Evangelist, just as they had seen in their own families during the post-plague era.

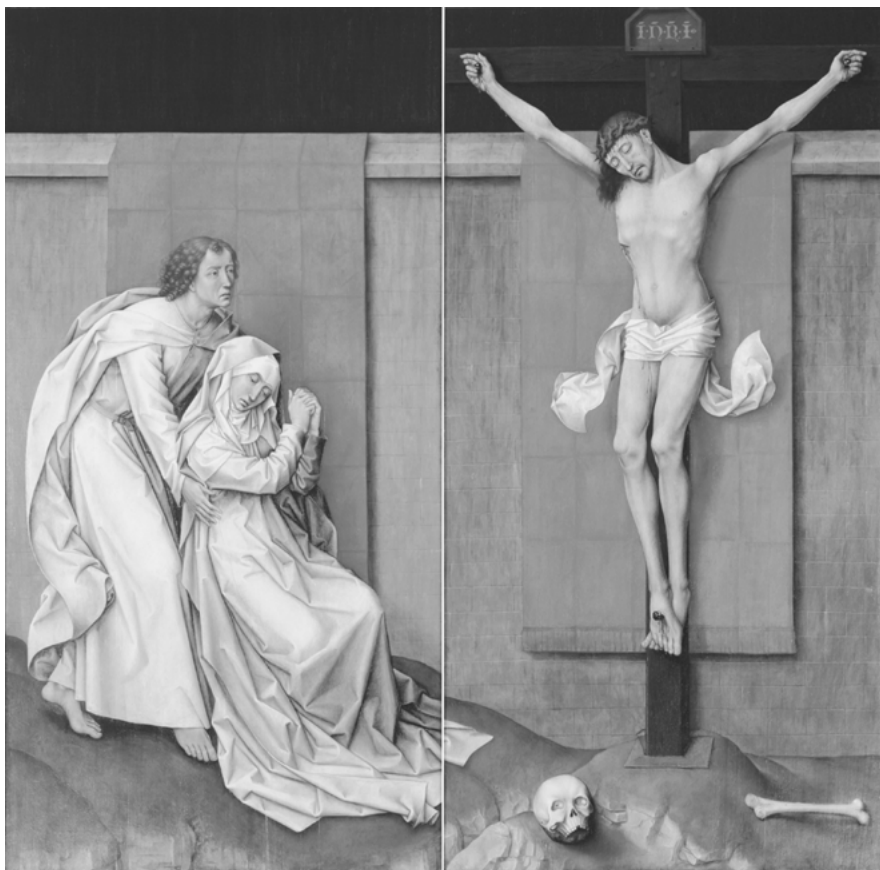


Fig. 8: Rogier van der Weyden's Crucifixion diptych "Christ on the Cross with the Virgin and St. John the Evangelist Mourning" (1455–1460)

Van der Weyden's diptych "Christ on the Cross with Mary and St. John the Evangelist" (1460) (Fig. 9) depicts Christ's emaciated, pathetically bleeding body with eyes closed and head angled on His right shoulder. The wound in his right side is torn flesh dripping blood down his leg. The protruding nails are grotesque and frightful. His weeping Mother below holds her garment to her eyes to absorb her tears. She is in a slouched position as her knees give way under the duress. St. John looks sorrowfully up at the figure of Christ, and with raised hands indicates his frustration and inability to alter the situation. The background behind the

crucified Christ is blood-red and matches the blood dripping down his body. The grieviers' garments are a grey color that matches Christ's wrap, and His body stands out as a flesh-colored centerpiece.

"The Pietà" by a follower of Konrad Witz (1440) (Fig. 10) poignantly represents the deceased corpse of Christ spread across his sorrowful mother's lap as if he were a babe, a new fourteenth-century motif linking the suffering of the characters in the picture as well as the audience. In the background is the representation of Christ's sepulcher on the right and the gothic City of Jerusalem in the center. Kneeling on the left is a donor depicted in pink who sympathetically touches His head. Mary's gown and shawl is depicted in blue, and the cloth on which Christ is lying is depicted in a bright gold. The scene is dramatically intense and emotional in its vivid colors, typical for the fourteenth century. The realism of the depiction blends the emotion of the scene with that of the audience who shares the experience of pain.

Further, agony in the audience during the Golden Age of the Book of Hours occurring from 1350 to 1480, evinces this death-obsession.⁷² For example, Jean, Duc de Berry's "Très Riches Heures," by the Limbourgs, folios 142–57, well depicts this suffering, especially "The Flagellation of 'Christus Rex'" f. 144 (Fig. 11). Here, the stripped Christ is tied to a pillar in front of the praetorium as three assailants alternately beat him with switches. The pitiful figure with bent, sagging knees, collapsing body, and a halo around his head is planted front and center as unsympathetic royal figures watch without compassion. St. John in the lower right corner records these events in a scroll. The grey-haired, bearded St. Peter looks out through the window with dismay. Like other French Gothic Illuminators, these painters display the emotional tenor of the fourteenth century resulting from the trauma of the Black Death experience across Europe in vivid color.

Hans Baldung Grien's "The Ages of Man and Death" (1540–1543) (Fig. 12) depicts a sleeping infant lying on the ground (Infancy), a young woman on the left (Youth), an old woman on the right (Old Age) who has one arm around the young girl, and an ominous figure of Death linking arms with Old Age, and balancing the earth upon an hourglass, the of sands of time. The baby has her eyes closed, and while unconnected to the other three figures, is close to elemental animals from which she evolved. The figure of Youth has fair skin and hair carefully plait-

72 Albrecht Classen, "Rural Space in Late Medieval *Books of Hours*: Book Illustrations as a Looking-Glass Into Medieval Mentality and Mirrors of Ecocriticism," *Rural Space in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age: The Spatial Turn in Premodern Studies*, ed. id. with the collaboration of Christopher R. Clason. *Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, 9 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2012), 529–59.

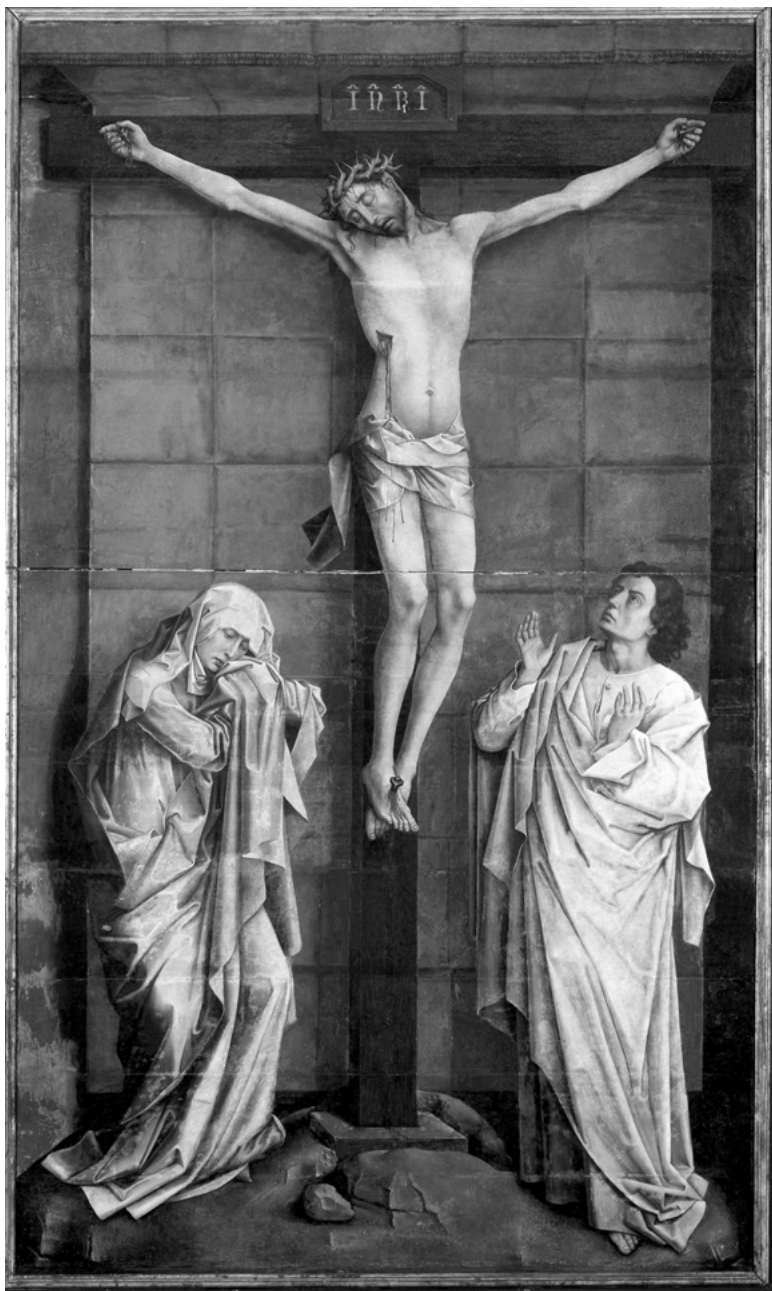


Fig. 9: Rogier van der Weyden's diptych "Christ on the Cross with Mary and St. John the Evangelist" (ca. 1460)



Fig. 10: “The Pietá” by a follower of Konrad Witz (ca. 1440) <http://wiki>

ed, looking as though she is well-cared for; the features of Old Age, looking amazingly like those of youth, are somewhat disheveled, wrinkled, with hair falling over one eye, waves falling carelessly down, and skin darker than Youth’s.

While Youth looks somewhat toward the audience, old age looks distinctly away. The emaciated figure of Death looks nearly bald, with facial and chest bones protruding as he balances earth over Time which he controls. The sky reveals a cloudy patch of moonlight over a crucifix-shaped cloud. The tree displays droopy vegetation as if it is aging along with man. The clear message is that Death is forcefully coercing Old Age to go with him to die, and Old Age is gently coercing Youth to follow with her hand on Youth’s shoulder. In time, the infant will be brought along with them.

And yet others created an allegorical figure of Death himself, often in the form of a skeleton, representing the end of life and universality of death in realistic, graphic fashion. According to Kvlt of Nyx,

The deathly horrors of the 14th century—such as recurring famines; the hundred Years’ War in France; and most of all the Black Death—were culturally assimilated throughout Europe. The omnipresent possibility of sudden and painful death increased the religious desire for



Fig. 11: Jean, Duc de Berry's "Très Riches Heures," by the Limbourgs, folios 142–57: "The Flagellation of 'Christus Rex'" f. 144 recto (ca. 1485)



Fig. 12: Hans Baldung Grien's "The Ages of Man and Death"
(1540–1543)

penitence, but it also evoked a hysterical desire for amusement while still possible; a last dance as cold comfort. The *dans macabre* combines both desires; in many ways similar to the mediaeval mystery plays, the *dans macabre* allegory was originally a didactic dialogue poem to remind the people of the inevitability of death and to advise them to be prepared at all times for death.⁷³

Hans Baldung Grien's "Three Ages of the Woman and the Death (1510) (Fig. 13) places the allegorical Death in the form of an emaciated corpse in the scene. Below is a kneeling baby representing the young woman as an infant in the first stage of life, who is tied to the young woman with a gauze-like veil. The young woman in the prime of life with long flowing wavy hair, in the second stage of her life, is holding a mirror. Perhaps she is looking at her younger self, or the older version of herself, who, on the viewers' left is attempting to ward off Death with her hand. Death is standing behind the young woman and is also tied to her by that veil. The bedraggled form of Death is holding an hourglass over her head to indicate that time is passing in her life. His angry eyes and determined pose are threatening her life as he is not submitting to the resisting hand of the woman in the third stage of her life. The insistence of the menacing Death in everyone's life is a reflection of the frightened mentality of the plague years.

The woodcut by Hans Holbein the Younger, "The Old Woman" (1538) (Fig. 14) presents a combination of two riotous skeletons, one leading with xylophone, another dancing energetically with wild arm gestures, leading a sober, reluctant woman to a death she does not want. The first skeleton furiously beats his xylophone encouragingly, oblivious to the confrontation behind him; the second skeleton indicates the direction with his foot and raised arm, and, sporting a laurel victory wreath, attempts to usher the old woman toward her death. She, on the other hand, looks down upon her cane, but fails to move her feet in that direction. Skeletons or dead dancers are inevitably lively and agile in contrast to the living, who appear clumsy and passive. Both music and personal stimulus fail to lead her forward; she is not tempted by their glib enthusiasm for she knows the finale of this journey.

The representation by Michael Wolgemut in his *dans macabre* cycle (1493) is instantiated in various poses, as the depictions of skeletal Death representations reveal: from hanging about healthy people in an intimidating fashion, to playing musical instruments, perhaps leading the audience in a dance to the hereafter, and actually doing a dance, possibly upon a dead body. This image from folio CCLXI recto from Hartman Schedel's "Chronicle of the World" (1493) (Fig. 15)

73 Kvlt of Nyx, online (see note 3) (last accessed on Dec. 5, 2014.)



Fig. 13: Hans Baldung Grien's "Three Ages of the Woman and the Death" (1510)



Fig. 14: Hans Holbein the Younger, "The Old Woman" (1538)

presents five skeletons, two dancing energetically in the center, one playing a clarinet-like instrument on the left, one dancing more stately around a shroud on the right, and the last emerging from a shroud on the ground, presumably

to join the others in their Dance of Death. The boisterous energy of the dancers reflects this “hysterical desire for amusement” or perhaps “a last dance as cold comfort” as noted above by Kvlt of Nyx.



Fig. 15: Michael Wolgemut’s “Dans Macabre” in Hartman Schedel’s “Chronicle of the World” folio CCLXI (1493)

The use of musical instruments often evokes the elements of seduction and sin which that music heralds. The Dance of Death: “Four Figures of Death, Playing on Musical Instruments” (1490) (Fig. 16) was printed by Guyot Marchand for the publisher Geoffroi de Marnef. These skeletal figures are arranged in an outdoor natural setting under a colonnade, and are playing the bagpipes, a xylophone, a harp, and a drum respectively. Rather than presenting a sinister demeanor, these figures may indicate a wish for joyous music before the final end of life. The obsession with skeletons that proliferated during the time of the plague is still affecting the European population in this and other woodcuts.

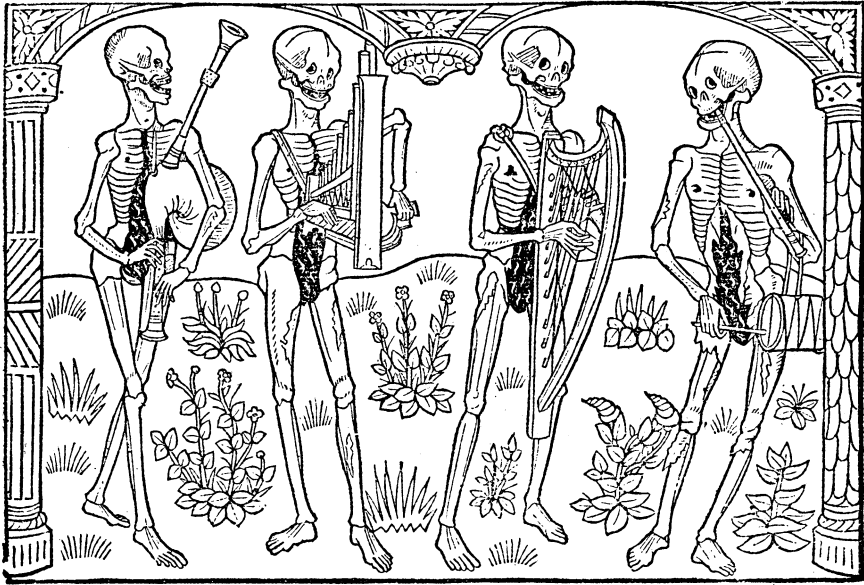


Fig. 16: Michael Wolgemut's *The Dance of Death: "Four Figures of Death, Playing on Musical Instruments"* printed by Guyot Marchand for publisher Geoffroi de Marnef (1490)

Conclusion

Comparing the relative effect of the Black Death on religious practices, various literatures, and fine art is speculative. Judging from the number of artifacts and how widespread their influence appears, however, may lead to the following hypothesis: the percent of overall influence of religious practices and affective piety might be 25% of these three categories, given the somewhat limited exposure they exhibit within local environments; about 35%, of the total influence of emotionality – pietistic, fearful, and dreaded – might be attributed to the literary genres given their wider circulation across Europe; and approximately 40% of the total influence on culture might be attributed to the concrete artistic representations due to their dramatic nature and widespread circulation among all European segments of society.

Certainly religious practices increased during this post-plague era. From processions, prayers, invocations, litanies, pilgrimages, flagellations and the Way of the Cross / Passion of Christ, we find the general populace involved primarily at a local level. Plague literature making direct and indirect reference to the Black Death is limited to various authors, but their works are often widespread, extend-

ing across European countries, and hence influential to readers and listeners. Dramatic production engaged audiences at a concrete as well as literary and emotional level, and chronicles were influential to the literate scholars of the time. Artistic artifacts, on the other hand, seem voluminous, being internationally created, replicated by other artists, and appreciated by the literate and non-literate masses alike, continuously over the next few centuries. Their influence can not be overestimated.

As Norman Cantor points out, “The plague was much more severe in the cities than in the countryside, but its psychological impact penetrated all areas of society.”⁷⁴ For centuries to come, the repercussions of this tumultuous plague continued to alter civilization of the Middle Ages, transforming it in unexpected ways.

Gruesome as the Black Death may have been, it yet holds a certain fascination for modern scholars, historians, biologists, academics, and young people. The more seductive skeletons, ghostly manifestations, and other-worldly visions may well captivate youth. Thus, the many and varied cultural aspects of the bubonic plague offer outcomes both startling and persistent. This phenomenon which changed the course of history in the fourteenth-century leads us one step further into the blossoming of the Renaissance, itself a momentous move into the future of civilization.

⁷⁴ Norman Cantor, *Civilization of the Middle Ages* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993), 482.

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***Bonum est mortis meditari*: Meanings and Functions of the Medieval Double Macabre Portrait¹**

The medieval collection in the Cleveland Museum of Art houses a fifteenth-century panel painting by an unknown master titled *Bridal Pair* that depicts a beautiful young man and woman side by side (Fig. 1).² They stand close together in a verdant wood, the man with one arm around the woman's waist and his other hand offering her a flower that she accepts delicately. The rich attire and tender gestures of the figures imply that their future as man and wife will include comfortable wealth and affection. And yet, residing in the Musée de l'Oeuvre Notre Dame in Strasbourg is another painted panel, cut from the back of the *Bridal Pair*, illustrating the true future of the two. Aptly titled *Standing Rotting Couple*, this painting depicts a male and female corpse side by side, their yellowing skin pulled taught over skeletal forms, and their bodies riddled through with snakes and other reptilian vermin (Fig. 2). White shrouds hang from their shoulders. The man uses his cloth to cover his genitals, but the woman allows the fabric to hang by her side, completely revealing the decomposition of her naked body in all its gruesome detail.

Together, these panels form a double macabre portrait.³ I argue that this particular type of macabre image suggests the blurred boundaries between life and death in medieval thought: specifically, the concept that death could trespass into the bodies of the living, and that the living could interact with the world of the dead. The double macabre portrait reveals to the viewer that death exists

1 I would like to thank the faculty of Case Western Reserve University's Art History department for their attention to this paper, and particularly Professor Elina Gertsman for her dedicated guidance and advice. I would also like to thank Professor Albrecht Classen for his comments, and for the opportunity to develop this paper.

2 For more about this painting, see: Michael Camille, *The Medieval Art of Love* (New York: Henry N. Abrams Inc., 1998), 159–62; Daniel Hess, *Das Gothaer Liebespaar: Ein ungleiches Paar im Gewand höfischer Minne* (Frankfurt: Fischer Taschenbuch, 1996), 20–24; Allmuth Schuttwolf et al., ed., *Jahreszeiten der Gefühle: Das Gothaer Liebespaar und die Minne im Spätmittelalter* (Ostfildern-Ruit: Verlag Gerd Hatje, 1998), 168–70; Jean Wirth, *La Jeune Fille et la Mort, Recherches sur les Themes Macabres dans l'art Germanique de la Renaissance* (Paris: Genève Librairie Droz, 1979), 41–43.

3 Wirth, *La Jeune Fille et la Mort* (see note 2), 38.



Fig. 1: *Bridal Pair*, oil on panel, ca. 1470, 24.5" × 20.06" Southern Germany



Fig. 2: *Standing Rotting Couple*, oil on panel, ca. 1470, 24.6" × 15.75"
Southern Germany

within the living body, and implies that corpses can exhibit signs of life after death. Using the Cleveland *Bridal Pair* and Strasbourg *Rotting Couple* as an example, I will also suggest several possible functions served by these images for the medieval viewer.

The Cleveland and Strasbourg panels have been published together several times as entries in the Cleveland Museum of Art catalogues, but have not yet been the subject of critical research or analysis.⁴ The general nature of double macabre portraits was explored by Jean Wirth in his seminal *La Jeune Fille et la Mort*, which discusses the Cleveland-Strasbourg painting alongside a similar portrait, now in Godesberg near Bonn, Germany.⁵ Wirth, who seems to have coined the very term “double macabre portrait,” argues that such objects were made for family homes as complementary to practices of private devotion, and that the contrast between the attractive living figures and their hideous rotting corpses served to remind the viewer that they were made from dust and to dust would be returned.⁶ Since Wirth’s publication, these portraits have escaped scholarly notice, although they are briefly mentioned in the context of *memento mori* imagery by historians of medieval culture of death.⁷ This article explores the many meanings of the double macabre portrait within the late medieval discourse on death through the lens of the Cleveland-Strasbourg and Godesberg panel paintings, with a special focus on their possible functions and reception.

The first examples of double macabre portraits appeared in the mid-fifteenth century as a new genre of painting that represented the dead body with a high level of painstakingly rendered detail.⁸ The emergence of this genre is sometimes associated with the increasing obsession with decay and rot, and with a corresponding fear of hell and damnation, found in medieval art from the twelfth century onward.⁹ The purpose of such gruesome images was to preach contempt for

4 Stephen N. Fliegel and Virginia Brilliant, “A Bridal Couple,” in *Sacred Gifts and Worldly Treasures: Medieval Masterworks from the Cleveland Museum of Art* (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 2007), 240–241; Wolfgang Stechow, “A Bridal Pair,” in *European Paintings Before 1500: Catalogue of Paintings: Part One* (Cleveland: The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1974), 34–36.

5 Berthold Hinz, “Liebe und Tod,” *Jahreszeiten der Gefühle: Das Gothaer Liebespaar und die Minne im Spätmittelalter*, ed. Allmuth Schuttwolf et al. (Ostfildern-Ruit: Verlag Gerd Hatje, 1998), 160–66; id., “Stehendes Hochzeitpaar Zwei: Doppeltafel *Liebe und Tod*,” *ibid.*, 171–72.

6 Wirth, *La Jeune Fille et la Mort* (see note 2), 39–42.

7 Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages: The Living and the Dead in Medieval Society*, trans. Teresa Lavender Fagan (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1994; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 216–17.

8 Wirth, *La Jeune Fille et la Mort* (see note 2), 38.

9 Caroline Walker Bynum, “Death and Resurrection in the Middle Ages: Some Modern Implications,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 142 (Dec., 1998): 589–96; here 591.

the world by exhibiting the horrific decay that is the fate of human beauty and corporeal charms.¹⁰ But for whom was this message intended? Although we lack the evidence to conclude whether the Cleveland-Strasbourg painting was created as a portrait likeness of a newly married couple or as a generic scene of lovers, its modest size suggests that, like other double macabre portraits, it was made for close intimate viewing in a domestic setting.¹¹ Therefore, this chilling visual reminder of mortality was incorporated into the interior of a family's home as a sight and site of death within a living space.

This kind of viewing corresponded to the late medieval rise of intimate devotion and personal meditation that involved contemplating images of emotional, as well as physical, suffering.¹² Like the contemporary depictions of the suffering and dead Christ whose body is ripped and ruined with bloody wounds, double macabre portraits emphasize the destruction of the human body (Fig. 3).¹³ Such is the case with the *Portrait of Hieronymus Tschekkenbürlin and Death* by an upper Rhenish Master dated to 1487 (Fig. 4). Roughly contemporary with the *Bridal Pair* and *Rotting Couple*, this diptych depicts a single man in three-quarter profile in one panel. The man turns toward the adjoined panel so as to be face to face with its image of a skeletal corpse. The corpse is slightly larger and more animated than his living counterpart in the other frame. While the subdued man delicately holds a flower by its stem, the corpse clasps its hands in front of its chest and twists its neck to look back at the adjoining panel. The *Rotting Couple*, too, appears even larger and more animate than the living figures in the *Bridal Pair*. Not only do the corpses still retain their eyes, they appear to be actively looking. Despite the fact that they are dead, these expressive bodies have enough consciousness and emotions to gesture—the man to himself as he covers his waist in modesty, and the woman to her mate as she gazes at him and places a hand on his shoulder in a gestural echo of wifely devotion.

The corpses of the *Rotting Couple* are imbued with force that animates their bodies. The presence of such a power is not unusual, as the body was considered in the late medieval period to be a vessel with the potential to be filled, not only with an immortal soul, but also with earthly and supernatural forces. Visionary

10 Johan Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages* (1919; New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 2nd ed., 1999), 126. For more on this theme: Paul Binski, *Medieval Death, Ritual and Representation* (London: British Museum Press, 1991).

11 Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages* (see note 7), 217.

12 Wirth, *La Jeune Fille et la Mort* (see note 2), 39.

13 Wirth, *La Jeune Fille et la Mort* (see note 2), 38.



Fig. 3: Master of Grosslobming, Vesperbild (Pietà), painted cast stone, ca. 1420, Austrian

and mystic religious devotion sought the spirit of God to penetrate corporeal flesh, but demonic forces could also invade the body.¹⁴

Demonic and divine possessions were not considered metaphors, but literal and physical realities in which a supernatural spirit would inhabit a human

14 Nancy Caciola, *Discerning Spirits, Divine and Demonic Possession in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), 15.



Fig. 4: Upper Rhenish Master, *Diptych: Hieronymus Tschekkenbürlin and Death*, mixed media on wood, 1487

being.¹⁵ While the *Rotting Couple* corpses appear to be the hosts of a life-giving power, there was another type of force presumed to be dwelling in the figures of the *Bridal Pair*, as well as inside the viewers of the image. Death was considered to inhabit the living human body, not as a temporary possessor, but as an entity constantly existing within. The idea of death occupying the bodies of the living was expressed in many forms of late medieval literature and art.

For instance, the theme of death existing within is found in Chaucer's fourteenth-century *Canterbury Tales* in which the Pardoner narrates a story about three young men who set out on a quest to slay Death after learning of their friend's demise of plague. "And we wol sleen this false traytour Deeth," they vow, "He shal be slayn, he that so manye sleeth."¹⁶ In the course of their journey, the three youths encounter a mysterious old man who tells them that they will find Death under a particular tree. When they arrive at the tree, what they find instead is gold. The men are then quick to betray and murder each other, thus

¹⁵ Caciola, *Discerning Spirits* (see note 14), 61.

¹⁶ Larry D. Benson, ed., *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd edition, based on *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987), 199; Karl S. Guthke, *The Gender of Death, a Cultural History in Art and Literature* (Cambridge: University Press, 1999), 39; see also the contribution to this volume by Jean E. Jost.

proving not only that the experience of death cannot be conquered, but also that the force of death was inside each man from the beginning. Although they named Death as a false traitor, it was they who were truly false and traitorous, becoming killers and ultimately corpses by the end of the story. In *The Pardoner's Tale*, death is an internal force of man, not personified as an "other."¹⁷ The men do indeed find death under the tree, not as a figure they can defeat, but in each other and in their selves. This story emphasizes the ultimate inevitability of death, as well as the unpredictable moment of its arrival.

The idea of death dwelling within was also expressed in visual art. To the late medieval viewer, gazing or meditating on an image was a communicative act in which the image would penetrate the eye and be imprinted on the interior of a person's body.¹⁸ Because a person would physically adapt to what he or she saw, medieval preachers warned that eyes and sight needed to be guarded and controlled because, simply put, you are what you look at.¹⁹ Therefore, when a medieval viewer gazed upon an image of a rotting corpse, such as the *Rotting Couple* or the *Portrait of Hieronymus Tschekkenbürlin and Death*, they were consuming that image and all of its decay. The images of snakes, toads, and grinning skulls came through the viewer's gaze to exist physically inside the live body.

The double macabre portrait held in the collection of the Aloisiuskolleg in Bad Godesberg expresses a message, similar to that of *The Pardoner's Tale*, of inevitability and suddenness of death to its viewers (Fig. 5).²⁰ Painted in the lower Rhine area circa 1470, the front of this object depicts a *Wedding Pair*. The man and woman stand together in an interior space in what appears to be a wedding scene similar to Jan van Eyck's *Arnolfini Portrait*, painted in 1432 (Fig. 6). The woman uses one hand to lift the front of her skirt while her other hand is held in the man's. The male figure uses his free hand to point upwards toward the round mirror on the far wall. This mirror does not replicate the entire room in miniature, but it does reflect the heads of the two figures. While the mir-

17 Guthke, *The Gender of Death* (see note 16), 39. See also the contribution to this volume by Daniel Pigg.

18 Thomas Lentes, "As Far as the Eye can See ...': Rituals of Gazing in the Late Middle Ages," *The Mind's Eye: Art and Theological Argument in the Middle Ages*, ed. Jeffrey F. Hamburger and Anne-Marie Bouché (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 360–73; here 362; Suzannah Biernoff, *Sight and Embodiment in the Middle Ages: Ocular Desires* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

19 Lentes, "As Far as the Eye can See" (see note 18), 361.

20 Hinz, "Stehendes Hochzeitspaar Zwei: Doppeltafel *Liebe und Tod*" (see note 5), 171–72. During a restoration process in which the painting was removed from its original wood panel the painting was flipped and is seen now as a mirror version of its original composition. For more on this painting, see Wirth, *La Jeune Fille et la Mort* (see note 2), 40–41.

ror reflects the back of the woman's head, it is her husband's face that appears in the mirror. The back of this panel depicts two skeletal corpses. The one on the left holds a crossbow and a shovel, while the one on the right holds a scythe. They stand off the side of a road in a landscape with three severed heads at their feet. Unlike the clearly identifiable genders of the figures in the *Strasbourg Rotting Couple*, the sex of the corpses in this painting is not distinguishable. Because the corpses are armed with weapons they appear to be bringers of death rather than doubles of the living couple on the other side of the painting.²¹



Fig. 5: *Standing Bridal Pair and Two Death Figures*, tempera on wood, ca.1470, Lower Rhine

However, the disembodied head of a man with long golden hair at the feet of the corpses does bear a resemblance to the golden haired youth in the wedding portrait. The repetition of his face in the wedding scene and the presence of a similar face in the death scene creates a visual link between the two sides of the object. The presence of the same youth as a groom and as a victim of the skeletal reapers enhances the theme of the equalizing and arbitrary force of death. The combination of wedding and death scenes on the two panels suggests that death can

21 Hinz, "Stehendes Hochzeitspaar Zwei: Doppeltafel *Liebe und Tod*" (see note 5), 172.



Fig. 6: Jan van Eyck, *Arnolfini Portrait*, oil on panel, 1434

strike at any moment despite the comforts of youth and the structures of society, and that the potential for death is a constant factor in every phase of life.

The Godesberg *Wedding Pair* and the Cleveland *Bridal Pair* conform to recognizable fashions and iconography of fifteenth-century courtly portraiture. The couple depicted in the *Bridal Pair* wears clothes in the style of Northern Italy considered in their time to be fine but simple.²² Their costume was fashionable for aristocratic upper ranks; the parti-colored hose of the man in particular were considered to be youthful and modish.²³ The woman gathers the train of her long dress in one hand held before her stomach in a gesture that indicates she is preparing for the groom to lead her away to their new home as a married couple.²⁴ A similar pose is also seen in the *Arnolfini Portrait*.²⁵ Because it creates the illusion of a swelling stomach, the gesture is also often interpreted as a reference to pregnancy and the children that will be produced through the marriage. The man and the woman are also wearing jeweled chaplets and matching damask left sleeves to indicate further visually their union.²⁶ The trees and flowers of the wood can be interpreted as evoking themes of earthly delights and the gardens of Paradise.²⁷

Through these iconographic details the social alliance of marriage is visually described as a happy and bountiful ritual. This visual expression is parallel to the idea that emerged in the twelfth century amongst the aristocratic class, a group to which the figures of the *Bridal Pair* clearly belong, of love as an emotional force that connects two people.²⁸ As the emotional bond of love is tied to the social bond of marriage, the joining of the Cleveland *Bridal Pair* to the Strasbourg *Rotting Couple* signifies that the medieval ritual of marriage extended beyond social statuses and affected the body and spirit both in life and after death.

Marriage rites integrating the exchange of gifts, promises, blessings from a priest, nuptial mass, and a benediction of the marriage chamber developed in

22 Douglas A. Russell, *Costume History and Style* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1983), 165.

23 Ruth Mellinkoff, *Outcasts: Signs of Otherness in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages*, vol. one (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), 23.

24 Linda Seidel, *Jan van Eyck's Arnolfini Portrait, Stories of an Icon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 106.

25 Seidel, *Jan van Eyck's Arnolfini Portrait* (see note 24), 106.

26 Camille, *The Medieval Art of Love* (see note 2), 160.

27 Margaret B. Freeman, *The Unicorn Tapestries* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1976), 112.

28 Albrecht Classen, "Introduction," *Discourses on Love, Marriage, and Transgression in Medieval and Early Modern Literature*, ed. Albrecht Classen (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2004), 1–42; here 2.

Europe in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries.²⁹ While it was largely a social and economic tradition, one of the additional objectives of marriage in the twelfth century was to prevent or escape the bodily act of fornication.³⁰ However, theological treatises condemned the human body's inherent urge to sin and denied that a veil of social acceptability could cleanse the soul.³¹ Even if considered inescapably tainted by the sins of the flesh, the medieval idea of marriage entailed a drastic refiguring of the human body. Paul's Letter to the Corinthians contains the following instructions: "The husband must give the wife what is due to her, and the wife equally must give the husband his due. The wife cannot claim her body as her own; it is her husband's. Equally, the husband cannot claim his body as his own; it is his wife's" (1 Cor. 7:3–4). Therefore, marriage was a time of transition for the body in Christian doctrine, as each party simultaneously surrendered ownership of their own body and gained possession of the body of their spouse. In the medieval construct of ideal marriage, the husband and wife should share all aspects of their life, and be as one soul and body.³² This level of concordance is visually described in the matching sleeves and close posture of the Cleveland *Bridal Pair*, and the motif of transition and physical union are seen in the gesture of the woman holding her skirt.

The interaction of the man and woman in the *Rotting Couple* further suggests that husband and wife are physically connected to each other even after death. In the *Rotting Couple* panel the female corpse stands on the proper left side of the painting. The woman is on the left, the sinister side, because she is a daughter of Eve.³³ In the painting of the *Bridal Pair*, the lovely woman stands on the proper right side of the frame, the good side, and the man stands on the left.

29 Christopher N. L. Brooke, *The Medieval Idea of Marriage* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 139.

30 D. H. Green, *Women and Marriage in German Medieval Romance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 21.

31 Lothario Dei Segni (Pope Innocent III), *On the Misery of the Human Condition*, ed. Donald R. Howard, trans. Margaret Mary Dietz (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1969), 8: "Everyone knows that intercourse, even between married persons, is never performed without the itch of the flesh ... whence the seed conceived is fouled, smirched, corrupted, and the soul infused into it inherits the guilt of sin, the stain of evil doing, that primal taint" (1.iii).

32 Albrecht Classen, "Love, Marriage, and Sexual Transgressions in Heinrich Kaufringer's Verse Narratives (ca. 1400)," *Discourses on Love, Marriage, and Transgression in Medieval and Early Modern Literature*, ed. Albrecht Classen (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2004), 289–312; here 299.

33 Michael Camille, "The Image and the Self: Unwriting Late Medieval Bodies," *Framing Medieval Bodies*, ed. Sarah Kay and Miri Rubin (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 62–99; here 83.

The arrangement of the figures in the two panels implies that in life the man succumbs to sin by literally embracing the body of his female companion, while in death it is the female corpse who places her hand on the shoulder of the male in an unreciprocated gesture. The dead man touches only himself, perhaps in a sign of repentance accorded to him by his being on the side of salvation, while the woman stands in her place of damnation. This connotes that the man can be saved from this path of damnation after death if he renounces and ignores the traitorous pleasures of the female body that are so tempting in life.

Although Paul's Letter to the Corinthians implies that the bodies of husband and wife should belong equally to each other, several other theological texts contain warnings to men about the dangers of possessing the treacherous female bodies of their wives. St. Augustine wrote, of the affection between married couples, that a man should love his wife insofar as she is a human being, but to hate what is feminine in her.³⁴ Bernard of Cluny described woman as a "guilty thing, wickedly carnal thing, or rather all flesh."³⁵ These examples articulate the idea that the female body was thought to be significantly different from the male body, which was vulnerable to its dangerous temptations.³⁶

The Strasbourg *Rotting Couple* is a reflection on the vanity of all things, including the youth and beauty of the Cleveland *Bridal Pair*.³⁷ The juxtaposition between beauty and horror, between the hideous corpses and the exquisite lovers, was intended to inspire a powerful beholding response.³⁸ This effect was designed to manipulate the experience of the viewer, not only in their interaction with the painting, but also in their understanding of life and death in order to inspire spiritually productive behavior.³⁹ Sometimes this inspiration came from feelings of distress or pain. In medieval Christian ideology, physical as well as mental pain was often considered to be a necessary condition that will eventually lead to a pleasurable reward, as powerfully illustrated by hundreds of hagiographical accounts about martyrs and saints.⁴⁰ If the sight of decaying corpses inspired mental anguish in the viewer, it was not with the intention of inducing

34 Green, *Women and Marriage in German Medieval Romance* (see note 30), 16.

35 Green, *Women and Marriage in German Medieval Romance* (see note 30), 18.

36 Camille, "The Image and the Self: Unwriting Late Medieval Bodies" (see note 33), 80.

37 Camille, *The Medieval Art of Love* (see note 2), 161.

38 Martha Easton, "Saint Agatha and the Sanctification of Sexual Violence," *Studies in Iconography* 16 (1994): 83–118; here 85.

39 Ashby Kinch, *Imago Mortis, Mediating Images of Death in Late Medieval Culture* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013), 16.

40 Robert Mills, *Suspended Animation, Pain, Pleasure and Punishment in Medieval Culture* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 2005), 159.

paralyzing fear, but a way to produce future happiness.⁴¹ By gazing upon their death, the viewers were encouraged to visualize and improve their life in preparation for its inevitable end.⁴² In the fourteenth century, German mystics criticized man's attachment of joys of this world by comparing them to the ever-greater joys of divine love that will be achieved through the mystic union of the soul and God in death.⁴³ Moreover, as Caroline Walker Bynum has argued, the knowledge and suffering of death helps the viewer to identify with the glorious suffering of Christ, which is better than the experience of any earthly joys.⁴⁴ By shucking off the trappings of worldly love, which promise corruption and damnation, the return to God through death was expected to be comforting rather than frightening.⁴⁵ Even Pope Innocent III's intensely grim treatise *On the Misery of the Human Condition*, written in the late-twelfth century, takes a slightly comforting tone when encouraging its readers to surrender mentally their lives to the inevitability of death in a passage that also suggests the constant presence of death within life: "We are forever dying while we are alive; we only cease to die when we cease to live. Therefore it is better to die to life than to live waiting for death, for mortal life is but a living death."⁴⁶

Among several, admittedly contradictory, ideas about death current in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, one in particular was prevalent: the theory that a body was not believed to be truly dead until a year after burial, at which time the spirit would finally separate from the corpse.⁴⁷ Corporeal rot was considered to be the sign of the soul's flight from the body, and it was also believed that worms and other vermin were born through decomposition, or generated purely through human putrefaction.⁴⁸ A literary description of

⁴¹ Mills, *Suspended Animation* (see note 40), 163; see also Albrecht Classen, "Wounding the Body and Freeing the Spirit. Dorothea von Montau's Bloody Quest for Christ, a Late-Medieval Phenomenon of the Extraordinary Kind," *Wounds and Wound Repair*, in *Medieval Culture* ed. Kelly DeVries and Larissa Tracy. *Explorations in Medieval Culture*, 1 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2015, 417–47); cf. also the other contributions and especially the introductory essay.

⁴² Georgia Frank, "Death in the Flesh: Picturing Death's Body and Abode in Late Antiquity" *Looking Beyond: Visions, Dreams, and Insights in Medieval Art & History*, ed. Colum Hourihane, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Index of Christian Art, 2010), 58–74; here 59.

⁴³ Wirth, *La Jeune Fille et la Mort* (see note 2), 29.

⁴⁴ Bynum, "Death and Resurrection in the Middle Ages" (see note 9), 592.

⁴⁵ Wirth, *La Jeune Fille et la Mort* (see note 2), 30.

⁴⁶ Lothario Dei Segni (Pope Innocent III), *On the Misery of the Human Condition* 1.xxiii (see note 31), 26.

⁴⁷ Camille, "The Image and the Self: Unwriting Late Medieval Bodies" (see note 33), 84.

⁴⁸ Michael Camille, *Master of Death: The Lifeless Art of Pierre Remiet, Illuminator* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), 178.

this process is found in a late-fifteenth century English Carthusian manuscript that contains the text of a poem titled *Disputacione betwyx the Body and Wormes* in which a pilgrim, after seeing a tomb effigy of a beautiful woman, dreams about a conversation between the decomposing body of the lady and the worms that devour her (Fig. 7).⁴⁹ The imagery of the poem describes a heated argument within the cold stone of the woman's tomb amidst a gruesome feast. "Most unnatural neighbors ever known," the woman laments, "You have me for lunch and for supper at night, Now gnawing and eating me right to the bone, With a greedy insatiable appetite."⁵⁰ The accompanying image juxtaposes the lovely, static effigy of the woman with the worms and other vermin actively crawling over her corpse inside the tomb. In the following pages of the poem the margins are decorated with the woman's corpse engaged in a gesticulatory conversation with a group of four enormous worms. Although it is set within a dream, the realm of death in this poem and its images is a self-conscious, active place. This poem and its visual treatment within the manuscript indicate the presence of some disconcerting anxieties about the fate of the body after death, and the liminal time when the soul still resides there.

The preamble that opens the poem invites the reader to look at the image of the woman's tomb and corpse in the manuscript and to "inscribe it upon your heart so you may learn some wisdom from studying it," because "while your grave is still undug it is good to think on death."⁵¹ By the end of the poem the decomposing lady has accepted her unpleasant state with the expectation that it will lead her to a better realm in the future. She asks the worms to forgive her impertinence, and suggests that they become friends for their remaining time together until Judgment Day and her acceptance into heavenly bliss.⁵²

When describing the process of decomposition in *On the Misery of the Human Condition*, Pope Innocent III drew comparisons between the human body's ability to produce vermin during life and after life: "Man is conceived of blood made rotten by the heat of lust. In life he produced lice and tapeworms; in death he will produce worms and flies. In life he produced dung and vomit; in death he produces rottenness and stench" (3.iv). As the Cleveland *Bridal Pair*

49 Colin Platt, *King Death, The Black Death and its Aftermath in Late-Medieval England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 159.

50 Poem translated in: Jenny Rebecca Rytting, "A Disputacioun Betwyx þe Body and Wormes: A Translation," *Comitatus: A Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 31 (2000): 217–32; here 227; lines 44–47.

51 Rosemary Horrox, ed., *The Black Death* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 347.

52 Rytting, "A Disputacioun Betwyx þe Body and Wormes" (see note 50), 232; lines 194–204.

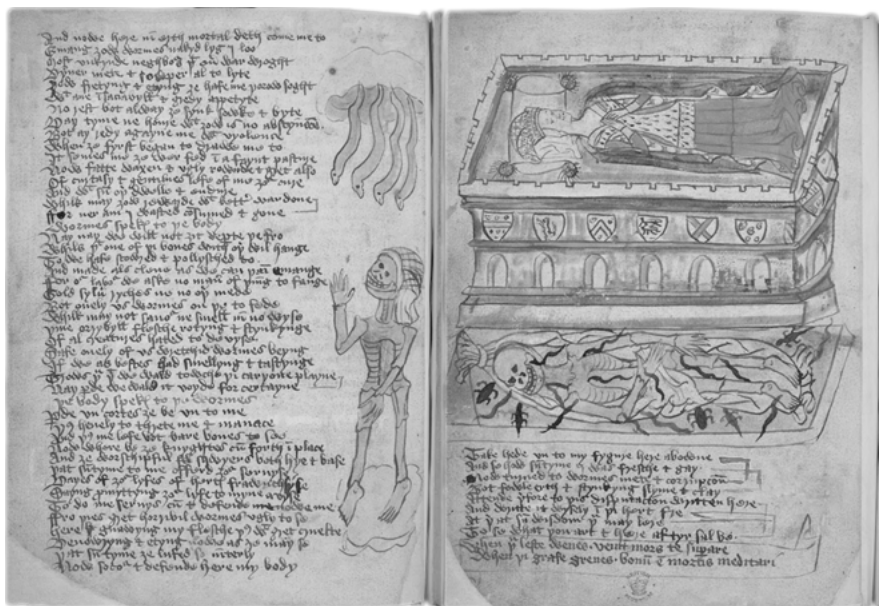


Fig. 7: A Carthusian miscellany of poems, chronicles, and treatises in Northern English, 1460–1500, paper, from a Yorkshire or Lincolnshire Carthusian monastery

contains references to fertility, so too in the Strasbourg *Rotting Couple* a fecund new life is grimly brought into the world as snakes burst out of human flesh and toads emerge from internal cavities. The corpses in the Godesberg panel also have worms emerging from gaping holes in their stomachs. This ability to produce and sustain new life renders the painted corpses grotesquely lifelike.

There are countless examples in late medieval art of rotting flesh represented on the ostensibly living body. One is the famous *Prince of Rot* on Strasbourg Cathedral's late thirteenth-century portal (Fig. 8).⁵³ This handsome and smiling man, whose body is corrupted with snakes and vermin, is interpreted as a figure of the devil.⁵⁴ Although he is capable of appearing in a beautiful form, he cannot completely conceal his true nature that manifests in physical decay. He holds in his hand a fruit, tempting a foolish virgin, in a visual echo of the serpent's temp-

⁵³ For more on the Strasbourg Cathedral portal sculptures, see Benoît Van den Bossche, *La Cathédrale de Strasbourg: Sculpture des Portails Occidentaux* (Paris: Picard, 2006).

⁵⁴ Kathleen Cohen, *Metamorphosis of a Death Symbol, The Transi Tomb in the Late Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 81; see also the contribution to this volume by Christina Welch.

tation of Eve. Not only do they share an allusion to the fall of man through Eve's sin, the *Prince of Rot* and the Strasbourg *Rotting Couple* represent bodies that are actively rotting but not completely dead. The *Prince of Rot* has a female counterpart as well—*Frau Welt*, a beautiful woman with toads crawling on her back, who represents the deception and vanity of the world.⁵⁵ A sculpture of *Frau Welt* in the late thirteenth-century Cathedral of Worms depicts her as a smiling queen whose back is covered with toads and snakes (Fig. 9). This beautiful woman secretly riddled with decay is also strongly associated with death and the devil.⁵⁶ *Frau Welt* is another example of a representation of the female body as the site of rot and evil concealed behind a lovely exterior. Her outer beauty and inner decay exist at the same time, within the same body.⁵⁷

Bodies that rotted while alive were a phenomenon that occurred for the medieval viewer in life as well as art. The visible disintegration of the body that occurs in those afflicted with leprosy was considered in the late Middle Ages to be identical to the process of post-mortem putrefaction.⁵⁸ Those who suffered from the disease were cast out of society through a ceremony of expulsion in which the afflicted stood in an open grave in a cemetery as a priest threw earth on their heads.⁵⁹ This ritual, in addition to their physical appearance, marked lepers as the walking dead. This concept of a leper as an animate corpse who existed in the world of the living signaled to the medieval viewer that the border between life and death was penetrable.

In medieval Christian doctrine the cycle of human life, including the agonies of childbirth and deathbed, was begun by the sin of Adam and Eve.⁶⁰ The life cycle was interpreted in the Middle Ages to include constructive lessons on

55 Cohen, *Metamorphosis of a Death Symbol* (see note 54), 81.

56 Cohen, *Metamorphosis of a Death Symbol* (see note 54), 81.

57 For similar *Frau Welt* imagery, see Konrad von Würzburg's poem *Der Welt Lohn*, ca. 1290, in Reinhard Bleck, *Konrad von Würzburg, Der Welt Lohn: in Abbildung der Gesamten Überlieferung, Synoptische Edition, Untersuchungen*. Göppinger Beiträge zur Textgeschichte, 112 (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1991); see also Alois Haas, "Tod und Jenseits in der Literatur des Mittelalters," *Himmel, Hölle, Fegefeuer: das Jenseits im Mittelalter: eine Ausstellung des Schweizerischen Landesmuseums in Zusammenarbeit mit dem Schnütgen-Museum und der Mittelalterabteilung des Wallraf-Richartz-Museums der Stadt Köln*, ed. Peter Jezler (Zürich: Verlag Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 1994), 69–78.

58 Susan Zimmerman, "Leprosy in the Medieval Imaginary," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 38.3 (Fall 2008): 559–87; here 560. For more on the treatment of the leper's body in the Middle Ages, see Carole Rawcliffe, *Leprosy in Medieval England* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2006).

59 Zimmerman, "Leprosy in the Medieval Imaginary" (see note 58), 560.

60 Camille, *Master of Death* (see note 48), 58.



Fig. 8: *Prince of Rot with the Foolish Virgins*, Strasbourg Cathedral ca. 1245, Strasbourg

the meaning of human existence and promote meditations on the nature of life.⁶¹ These meditations created a sense that death was a familiar and near experience about which people were forewarned.⁶² If one was well aware of the progression of life, one could prepare for death.⁶³ Preparation was certainly necessary for the medieval viewer, because the moment of death was also the moment of judgment for the body and soul.⁶⁴ In order to plan for this most important event, one could consult the late fifteenth century printed book *Ars moriendi*, or the art of dying well, which clearly instructed the reader how to prepare the mind and soul to die with grace.⁶⁵ In the medieval treatment of corpses, one can see that this ideal tidiness of dying extended to an ideal tidiness of the dead.

⁶¹ Elizabeth Sears, *The Ages of Man: Medieval Interpretations of the Life Cycle* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 6.

⁶² Bynum, "Death and Resurrection in the Middle Ages" (see note 9), 590.

⁶³ See also the contribution to this volume by Scott L. Taylor.

⁶⁴ Bynum, "Death and Resurrection in the Middle Ages" (see note 9), 589.

⁶⁵ Sister Mary Catherine O'Connor, *The Art of Dying Well, The Development of the Ars moriendi* (New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1966), 5. For the text of the *Ars moriendi*, see: *The Book of the Craft of Dying, and Other Early English Tracts Concerning Death*, ed. George Congreve (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1917).

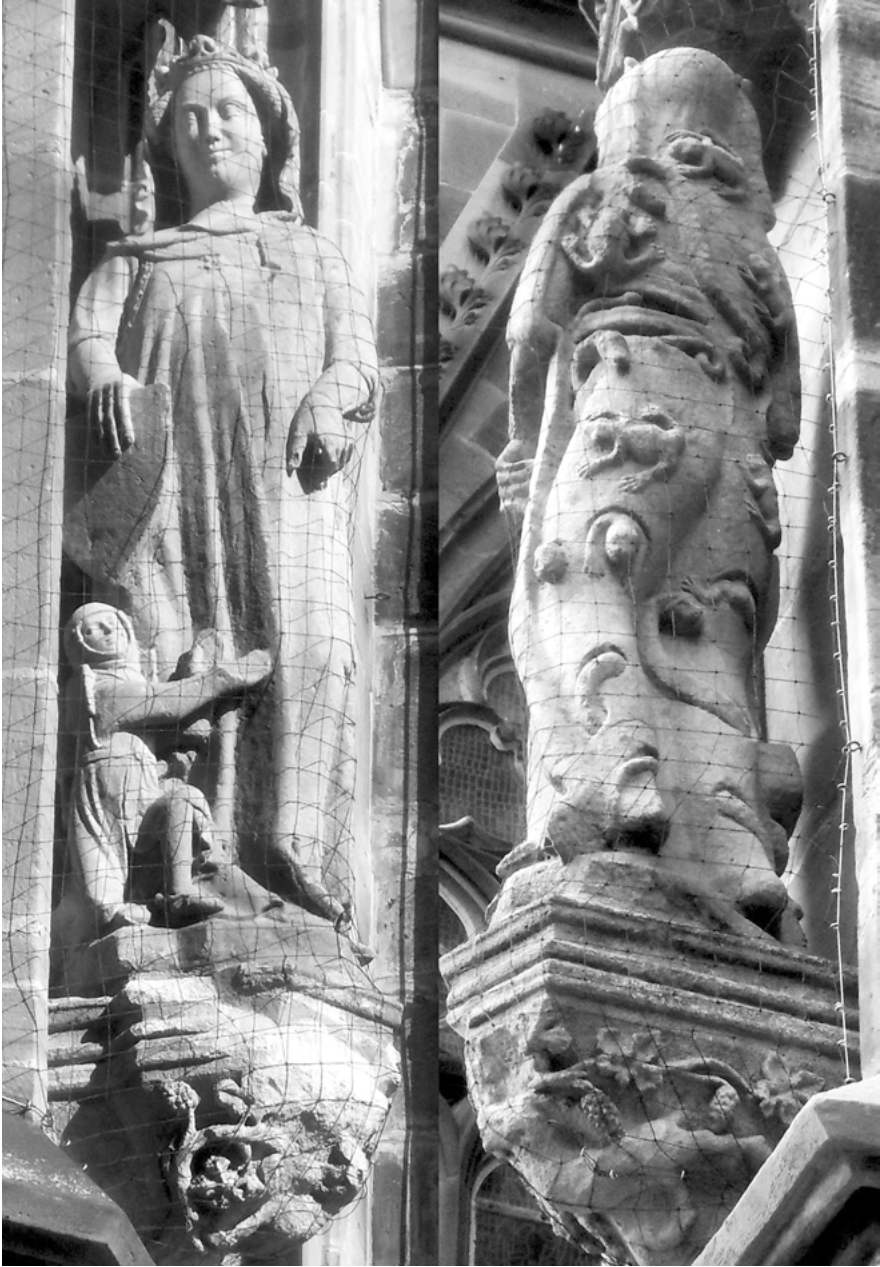


Fig. 9: *Frau Welt*, Worms Cathedral, ca. 1298, Worms (historical photo from 1926)

Contrary to a Monty Python-inspired modern impression of filthy medieval villagers clumsily disposing of corpses by the heaping wagonload, internment of bodies usually followed quickly after death for practical reasons, including a fear of contagion.⁶⁶ It was rare for a medieval viewer to see an actual corpse in an advanced state of decay, such as those represented in the *Rotting Couple*.⁶⁷ However, this does not preclude the fact that medieval people thought about death and bodily decay with some regularity, and were frequently exposed to many representations of death in their visual culture.

Similarly, for the viewers of the Godesberg and Cleveland-Strasbourg double macabre portraits, the border between life and death is difficult to define. The figures of Cleveland *Bridal Pair* are placed in a dark and overgrown forest clearing. Their corresponding *Rotting Couple* stand in a black nowhere much more dark and ominous than the wooded glade. The Godesberg *Wedding Pair* is set in a domestic interior while the corresponding death scene depicts corpses striding through a rolling field interrupted by a tree and a winding road. In both objects the live couple and the corpses are depicted as existing in contrasting settings: the living in an identifiable space, and the dead in an ambiguous landscape. The place that the Strasbourg *Rotting Couple* inhabits is particularly strange, and seems to be an abstraction rather than an actual location. It does not appear to be any identifiable place on earth, nor is it recognizable as heaven or hell. These dead figures stand in a darkness that is neither here nor there; an in-between place that appears to gesture to the medieval concept of purgatory.

The idea of purgatory seems to have evolved out of the confusion, debates, and controversy leading to and following the *Benedictus Deus*, a papal bull describing the fate of the soul during the time after death and before the Last Judgment.⁶⁸ Purgatory came to be considered as a temporary stage to which some souls were admitted after death, depending on their moral status.⁶⁹ Although it was in theory an experience of the soul, the liminal period or place of purgatory was imagined and described by medieval theologians in somatic terms.⁷⁰ The bodies of the *Rotting Couple* are perhaps an example of this type of expression. Being neither completely alive nor dead, and inhabiting a place that is nei-

⁶⁶ Camille, *Master of Death* (see note 48), 175.

⁶⁷ Camille, *Master of Death* (see note 48), 175.

⁶⁸ Caroline Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200–1336* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 285. For further reading on medieval concepts of purgatory, see Jacques Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (1981; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

⁶⁹ Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body* (see note 67), 289.

⁷⁰ Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body* (see note 67), 281.

ther heaven nor hell, the image of these animate corpses evoke an anxiety over the fate of the body and soul in the purgatorial time before the Last Judgment.⁷¹

Purgatory existed in the liminal border between life and death. This border could be breached by the intercessory prayers of the living on behalf of the dead, which could change the amount of time and suffering that the deceased endured in Purgatory.⁷² The idea of interaction is also necessary to the experience of the double macabre portrait, not only the interaction between the viewer and the object, but also the interaction between worlds. Although the viewer could only see one side of the panel at a time, he or she was aware that the two scenes were physically joined. Perhaps, if they held the panel in their hands to look upon one side, their fingers would be touching the back of the painting. Therefore, while they visually engaged with the scene of life they experienced a simultaneous haptic encounter with the scene of death, and while gazing at the image of the dead they also touched the image of the living.

For double macabre portraits the border between the space of the living and the space of the dead was formed from the visual contrast of the two scenes and the viewers inability to see the front and back of a panel simultaneously. However, this border was broken by viewer's ability to experience haptically both sides at once. This transgression between visual scenes of life and death indexes, perhaps, the division between the worlds of the living and the dead. The viewer's ability to mediate between the two worlds of the double macabre portrait was therefore similar to the mediatory interaction that the living could experience with deceased residing in Purgatory.

Although medieval people did not live in constant cohabitation with the bodies or ghosts of their dead, there were occasions when the deceased were imagined to reenter the world of the living.⁷³ Late medieval equivalents of zombie urban legends suggests a fear that the vitality of people who had strong ill will, or who died badly, might live on inside of their corpse and animate it as a revenant.⁷⁴ In these stories the revenant is never a skeleton, but a corpse with flesh; someone dead but not completely decomposed.⁷⁵

Unlike many traditional *memento mori* images that depict a skeleton, the Strasbourg *Rotting Couple* unquestionably depicts corpses that still have flesh. Their status as animated corpses, and visual similarity to legendary revenants,

71 See the contribution to this volume by Katharina Baier and Werner Schäffke.

72 Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body* (see note 67), 289.

73 Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages* (see note 7), 6.

74 Caciola, "Wraiths, Revenants and Ritual in Medieval Culture," *Past & Present* 152 (Aug., 1996): 3–45; here 29.

75 Caciola, "Wraiths, Revenants and Ritual in Medieval Culture" (see note 73), 52.

reference the ambiguous concept of death and the consequent anxiety the medieval viewer might have felt when contemplating that uncertain time between the physical death of the individual and the arrival of Judgment Day. Corpses, such as those in the *Rotting Pair*, can be considered to be in a liminal state, as they do not belong in the world of the living, but are not completely absent from it either.⁷⁶ A corpse is macabre because it is both foreign and familiar; the body is a strange rotting double of the whole person it once was and will be again after the Last Judgment.⁷⁷ While the spirit is the principle of vitality, the body is a sort of clothing that the spirit will shed at death, and reclaim again at the end of time when all bodies will rise to be reunited with their original souls.⁷⁸ The connection of the Cleveland *Bridal Pair* to the Strasbourg *Rotting Couple* may represent a culturally and personally felt angst over the fate of the resurrected body at the end of time.

The uneasy union of whole and rotting bodies of the couples in the double macabre portrait is emphasized by the fact that they simultaneously exist as two different forms in two different realms—the living in a wooded landscape, and the dead in a dark void. When the paintings were joined, the Cleveland *Bridal Pair* and Strasbourg *Rotting Couple* would align so that the living and the dead women would be back to back, and the living and the dead men back to back: their bodies physically united, but their gazes directed outward in the opposite direction of their counterpart. Because the panels of the *Bridal Pair* and *Rotting Couple* are mirror images of each other, when the panel is turned over from front to back, the viewer sees the painted man and woman visually transform into their corpse doubles. The beholders experiencing the double macabre portrait in the Middle Ages could see the transformation of the bodies in the two paintings as a mirror reflecting the future transformation of their own bodies. This experience was part of a visual and cultural training that prepared the self to experience the progress and end of life.

I suggest that the Cleveland *Bridal Pair* and Strasbourg *Rotting Couple*, combined in their original form, served a reconciliatory purpose. Although the *Rotting Couple* may elicit a response of horror, such a reaction was part of the larger process of contemplating on and conversing with death that lives within. The Godesberg *Wedding Pair*, although it does not present the same case of live bodies mirrored with dead bodies, also combines the message of the inevitable and

⁷⁶ Camille, *Master of Death* (see note 48), 175.

⁷⁷ For a discussion of concepts of the macabre, see Elina Gertsman, *The Dance of Death in the Middle Ages, Image, Text, Performance*. Studies in the Visual Cultures of the Middle Ages, 3 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), 23–42.

⁷⁸ Caciola, “Wraiths, Revenants and Ritual in Medieval Culture” (see note 73), 12.

equalizing force of death with the moment of marriage. The image of vitality is physically and visually connected to the image of death because the medieval viewer was supposed to contemplate and come to terms with death in the midst of life. Full possession of healthy mental faculties was required to engage with the destructive forces that lived within, and to reach for the forces of salvation that could ease the experience of dying and eventually conquer death itself. By mentally, emotionally and physically interacting with the double macabre portrait, and accepting the presence of mortality in life, the medieval viewer could use the painted image to prepare for a good death.

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Imagining the Mass of Death in Chaucer's *Pardoner's Tale*: A Critique of Medieval Eucharistic Practices

That the mock mass among the three rioters in the *Pardoner's Tale* is a mass of death has been noted by a number of scholars, who observe the quite obvious Eucharistic and crucifixion imagery.¹ Paul Strohm has noted the text's handling of ideas about the Eucharist and masses said in memory of the departed that would have been current debate in Wycliffite circles; he terms the comments about substance and accidents of the Eucharist as part of Chaucer's "Lollard Joke."² More recent historicist readings by Alastair Minnis have provided wider contexts for understanding this tale.³ The present paper examines the actions of the three rioters in a new context that the tale attempts to subvert as it mimics the action of the mass. At the same time, this essay suggests that medieval cultural studies can help us to examine aspects of religious practices that are deeply rooted in the psyche of the period and at the same time held up to critique by an author through his agent, the Pardoner. Thus the Pardoner becomes the refracting prism for understanding.

Of the tales in the Canterbury project, the *Pardoner's Tale* is the only one set at the time of the Black Death (1348–1351) or perhaps more generalized plague of the late Middle Ages, and the symbolic manifestations of this major social and economic disaster in history serve as a major backdrop in the tale as Peter Beidler has noted.⁴ What has not been observed thus far in studies of the tale are the connections between masses said for the dead and the mock mass of the tale. The allusions to bread and wine are no accident; in fact, they are part of the substance of the story to use a pun that the tale itself uses. For the most part, critical studies

1 All references to the *Pardoner's Tale* are to *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd ed., ed. Larry D. Benson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), 193–202. See Clarence H. Miller and Roberta Bux Bosse, "Chaucer's Pardoner and the Mass," *Chaucer Review* 6.3 (1972): 171–84. Scholars since the writing of this article take these ideas as givens in the text of the tale.

2 Paul Strohm, "Chaucer's Lollard Joke: History and Textual Unconscious," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 17 (1995): 23–42.

3 Alastair Minnis, *Fallible Authors: Chaucer's Pardoner and the Wife of Bath*, The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 135–47.

4 Peter Beidler, "The Plague and Chaucer's Pardoner," *Chaucer Review* 16.3 (Winter 1982): 257–69; see also Jean E. Jost's contribution to this volume.

have read from the text outward to find social manifestations that would make the tale make sense. Thus the literary text is seen as a reflector of external realities.

This essay proposes to read from the outside cultural texts inward toward Chaucer's tale. By reconstructing the background, readers can come to appreciate the work of ambivalence which the tale truly is. Such an analysis should not be understood as reading in, but as an examination of the contours that might help to shape such a text. Susan Sontag's *Illness as Metaphor and AIDS and Its Metaphors* shows how diseases such as cancer and tuberculosis from the nineteenth century on have structured social space with a metaphysics and language, not only in the treatment of illnesses arising from these diseases but also in terms of notions of the effects of tuberculosis, for example, on the creative mode for interpreting and representing life and aesthetics.⁵ The same might well be said of the Black Death in 1348–1351 throughout England and Western Europe. Institutional practices such as the expanded number of chantries for saying masses for the dead sprang up or intensified, to address the issues associated with death and calamity, whether in sermon or proclamation, or sacrament. Many clergy left their parishes that were dwindling and made their way to cities to say masses for the dead.

With somewhere between one third and one half of the population across England and Western Europe without respect to age, gender, or class distinction dying in a few short years, such an element was bound to restructure social and religious space. Such an impact can be seen in texts such as Boccaccio's *Decameron* and in the increasingly gruesome artistic depictions of Christ's crucifixion after the plague. This essay asserts that the plague's structuring of social space can be particularly well observed in religious practices. Read along cultural lines, the mock mass of the *Pardoner's Tale* assumes even greater relevance in light of late medieval celebrations of Corpus Christi or the mass as well as the growing superstitions surrounding the Eucharist in general as it also attempts to structure social space in the text.

I

By Chaucer's day the connection between the mass and death was already well established in the minds of noble and middle-class people, who were setting the number of masses to be said for the departed souls of their family members in their wills. Priests were increasingly becoming involved in these private celebrations

⁵ Susan Sontag, *Illness and Its Metaphors and AIDS and Its Metaphors* (New York: Picador, 2001). What she specifically means is the way in which the disease is treated is often spoken of as warfare or stealth.

of masses for the dead, often in London and larger urban areas, instead of rural parishes that had shrunk in size as a result of the Black Death. Comments about priests leaving their charges for the more lucrative position of chantry priests at the urban cathedral are observable in both texts by Langland and Chaucer. In the Prologue to *Piers Plowman*, the dreamer notes the movement of clergy to London to say masses for the dead on account of the money. The narrator of the *Canterbury Tales* in the *General Prologue* portrait of the Parson commends him for staying with his parish rather than following the easier life of saying chantry prayers in London. Certainly, Chaucer in the *Pardoner's Tale* is not ridiculing a late medieval practice of piety, but he may well have in mind that celebrations of the mass were culturally blurry at best. In post-Plague England, there were likely more masses said for the dead than for the living. Rather than being associated more with the living, the tendency was to see the mass connected with the dead. That death is inscribed at deep levels in the tale suggests further re-appropriation of the cultural practice. To put it in a metaphorical way, just as Chaucer's Pardoner carries fake relics which are parodic and denatured emblems of genuine relics, he tells a tale where a mock mass is celebrated in a way that provides a parodic critique of typical religiosity. The Pardoner imaginatively asks us to enter his own world of blurred institutionalism and religious superstition. Seen in this way, Chaucer's Pardoner undermines even more institutional forms with his satirically seductive elements.

Understanding the complete ramifications of the Eucharist in the Middle Ages is much beyond the scope of this essay, but several key principles would be helpful in our archeological examination of the Eucharist in Chaucer's text. The last decade has witnessed the opening of explorations about the material practices of late medieval Christianity apart from Protestant approaches which have dominated much of medieval scholarship and Catholic scholarship which has traditionally sublimated the problematic, particularly of the Eucharist as a personal, ecclesiastical, and civic act.⁶ First, celebration of the mass in the Middle Ages was tied by the allegorizers to events surrounding the Crucifixion that were represented before the eyes of viewers through the words and gestures of the priest. Allegorizers saw liturgical action as symbolizing the struggle between Christ and Satan in which Christ was ultimately victorious. Honorius of Autun's (1080–1151) description, perhaps best known in connection with perceiving the dramatic in liturgical reenactment, provides an important sketch of this mentality:

⁶ The following are good examples of this new approach to medieval religion: David Aers, *Sacratifying Signs: Making Christian Tradition in Late Medieval England* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004); Caroline Walker Bynum, *Christian Materiality: An Essay on Religion in Late Medieval Europe* (New York: Zone Books, 2011).

Sciendum quod hi qui tragoedias in theatris recitabant, actus pugnantium gestibus populo repraesentabant. Sic tragicus noster pugnam Christi populo Christiano in teatro ecclesiae gestibus suis repraesentat, eique victoriam redemptionis suae inculcate. Itque cum presbyter Orate dicit, Christum pro nobis in agonia positum exprimit, cum apostolos orare monuit. Per secretum silentium, significat Christum velut agnum sine voce ad victimam ductum. Per manuum expansionem, designat Christi in cruce extensionem. Per cantum praefationis, exprimit clamorem Christi in cruce pendens. Decem namque psalmos, scilicet a Deus meus respice usque In manus tuas commendo spiritum meum cantavit, et sic exspiravit. Per canonis secretum innuit Sabbat silentium. Per pacem, et communicationem designate pacem datam post Christi resurrectionem et gaudii communicationem. Confecto sacramento, pax et communio populo a sacerdote satur, quia accusatore nostro ab agonothea nostro per duellum prostrato, pax a iudice populo denuntiatur, ad convivium invitatur. Deinde ad propria redire cum gaudio per *Ite missa est* imperatur. Qui gratias Deo jubilat et gaudens domum remeant.

[It is known that those who recited tragedies in the theaters represented to the people, but their gestures, the actions of conflicting forces. Even so, our tragedian (the celebrant) represents to the Christian people in the theater of the Church, by his gestures, the struggle of Christ, and impresses upon them the victory of his redemption. Accordingly when the priest says "Pray," he expresses Christ placed for us in agony, when he admonished the apostles to pray. By the liturgical silence he signifies Christ as a lamb without voice being led to the sacrifice. By the extension of his hands he delineates the stretching out of Christ on the cross By the secret recital of prayers in the canon he implies the silence of the Sabbath (Holy Saturday). By the "peace" and the imparting of it (the kiss of peace), he depicts the peace given after Christ's resurrection and the imparting of joyful tidings. When the sacrament is brought to completion, peace and communion are given by the priest to the people, because, when our accuser has been overthrown by our champion in the conflict, peace is announced by the judge to the people, (and) they are invited to a feast. Therefore after they are commanded by the "Go", the mass is ended to return home with rejoicing. They exclaim thanks to God and return home rejoicing.]⁷

Images of sacrifice and death, however, still dominated the understanding of the mass. At the same time, what the text suggests is how the ritual performance enacts its own performativity—it represents a kind of creative enactment through the community's understanding of symbolic performance.⁸

The Eucharist was somewhat unique among the sacraments because it was repeatable as was penance. It was understood to be a reenactment as the allegorical reading had noted earlier of the Last Supper on the evening before Christ's death.

⁷ Honorius of Autun, *De Tragoediis*, "Medieval Drama," ed. David Bevington (Dallas, TX: Houghton Mifflin, 1975), 9. See also Karl Young, *Drama of the Medieval Church*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), 1: 82–83, 549.

⁸ For an understanding of the concepts of performativity, see Andrew Parker and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Introduction," *Performativity and Performance*, ed. id. Essays from the English Institute (New York and London: Routledge, 1995), 1–18.

What would medieval people have known and understood about the mysteries of the sacrament? What did clergy know about this sacrament? There is evidence of the development of a number of manuals for parish priests that instructed them not only in the manual acts—how to hold one's hands and what movements to perform—but also the topics for sermons. In England, *The Book of Virtues and Vices*, Mirk's *Festial*, and *Handyng Synne* are among the many examples. Certainly the celebration of the Eucharist and teaching in the form of sermon were connected.⁹ They are also connected even in the *Pardoner's Tale*, for he gives a sermon before the sharing of the mock Eucharist!

The contents of one of these priestly manuals might be a tract-sermon that contained the basic theological understanding of the Eucharist. Since this study looks at the way orthodoxy could be turned upside down in the “develes temple” (470) tavern, it seems prudent to establish a foundation:

The tract-sermon taught that there were four important matters in the sacrament: the priest, the bread and wine, the intention to consecrate, and the proper utterance of the words of consecration. It emphasized Christ's presence in the sacrament, explained the meaning of the wine and water as the blood and water which flowed from Christ's side, and stressed the concomitance of flesh and blood in every bit of the host. The sermon also reminded the hearer that the Eucharist had been established under the form of bread and wine so as to test faith, to avoid abhorrence of raw flesh, and to save the body of Christ from the ridicule of heretics. It also taught that fasting must precede reception and that when well received the Eucharist saved from sin and enhanced grace. One can almost hear in the answers the questions and issues which vexed people on the nature of the sacrament, of God's body, of their communion.¹⁰

Second, while it was celebrated every Sunday, weekday, and on holy days, most medieval Christians only partook of the Eucharist once each year during the Easter season. The visual became the means of participation for most as they watched the priest consecrate and consume the sacrament. Outside the church building proper, on certain days it was visibly displayed in Corpus Christi processions, and as Sarah Beckwith has noted, “The host on its way to visit the sick and dying becomes a synecdoche for the entire devastated society [after the Black Death] that it seeks to salve and embrace.”¹¹ Margery Kempe herself notes the power of such processions

⁹ Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 83–107.

¹⁰ Rubin, *Corpus Christi* (see note 9).

¹¹ Sarah Beckwith, *Christ's Body: Identity, Culture and Society in Medieval Writings* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 102–03.

in the city of King's Lynn. With these notions in mind, Kempe's request and subsequent permission to receive weekly Eucharist was highly irregular.¹²

Third, it should be noted that after the Black Death the number of chantries established for the saying of masses for the dead increased dramatically. As Joseph A. Jungemann notes "there were during the last centuries of the Middle Ages an unnatural multiplication of Masses, and, along with it, an unnatural increase in clergy, of whom a part, at least, derived their entire income from masses through endowments (foundations or chantries) or by way of stipend."¹³ Jungemann's statement should be understood as a Protestant historian's analysis of the events, with a somewhat pejorative judgment inherent. In a directly tangible way the mass, death, and money from families, guilds, and bequests in wills fuse in a similar circulation of energies parodied in the *Pardoner's Tale*.

Alongside the ecclesiastically sanctioned uses of the Eucharist were those by no means sanctioned by the Church, but which seem to have been widely known. Studies have revealed a variety of practices. Caesarius of Heisterbach, who also provided a book of exempla, noted that some people actually thought they could celebrate the Eucharist at the own dinner tables at home; thus dismissing the requirement of a priest.¹⁴ He also included a good number of exempla of people who had stolen the Eucharist for material gains and were then taught a miraculous lesson. The Eucharist was desirable for its healing properties, such as to make crops grow or to dispel a fever.¹⁵ Miri Rubin's study on medieval Eucharistic culture notes abuses that sprang up surrounding mass celebrations. Stories record incidents in which a person in a state of sin might be choked to death by receiving the host. Masses for the dead could be said to harm the living "so that they die sooner."¹⁶ Rubin notes that "waxen images were placed under the altar pall so that masses for the dead would be said over them, and these images would harm those represented in them."¹⁷ It was also believed that receiving the Euchar-

12 Margery Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 75–76.

13 Joseph A. Jungemann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origins and Development*. 2 vols. (New York: Four Court Press/Christian Classics, 1986), vol. 1, 130.

14 Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, (see note 9), 319–20. See Caesarius of Heisterbach. *The Dialogue on Miracles*, 2 vols. trans. H von E. Scott and C. C. Swinton Bland, with an introduction by G. G. Coulton (London: G. Routledge and Sons, 1929). For Caesarius, see now Albrecht Classen, "Madness in the Middle Ages – An Epistemological Catalyst? Literary, Religious, and Theological Perspectives in Caesarius of Heisterbach's *Dialogus Miraculorum*," *Discourse of Madness*, ed. R.-L. Etienne Barnett (forthcoming).

15 Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi* (see note 9), 340–41.

16 Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, (see note 9), 338.

17 Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, (see note 9), 338.

istic host could “induce” miscarriage and develop into a form of poison for those not in the state of grace.¹⁸ What should be obvious here is that clergy would have had some knowledge of what was occurring. That the *Book of Virtues and Vices* notes that the sixth bough of the tree is “simony, a clerical vice, buying and selling the sacrament” provides evidence that higher ecclesiastical authorities were aware of aberrant practices which clergy might perform for financially endowed parishioners who sought the power of the Eucharist for unauthorized activity.¹⁹ The implicit power of the sacrament was certainly well known as it appears in the glazing schemes of churches where a snake rises out of a chalice, connecting both life and death with the Eucharist. Clearly, all of these are magical superstitions surrounding the Eucharist unsponsored by the dominant ecclesiastical establishment, but they nonetheless connect the mass, the mass of the dead, and death itself together in the cultural mind. Medieval religion and actual belief about religion are by no means monolithic, and we should note that a variety of beliefs seem to have existed side by side. Certainly, the ecclesiastical authorities did not “look the other way,” but superstitions that reduced the sacraments to acts of magic were widely known and attested in medieval texts.²⁰

II

Much of the criticism of the *Pardoner's Tale* has examined the shadowy and undefinable nature of the teller, the form of the text, and its treatment of literal and allegorical levels of interpretation, which the narrative seems to demand. Rather than reading the tale, however, along allegorical lines, it might be more appropriate to examine only the literal and symbolic levels, for it is at these two levels that the material practices of Eucharistic culture and the tale's mock celebration have resonance.

In the Prologue to the *Pardoner's Tale*, Harry Bailly finds himself in a difficult mood after hearing *The Physician's Tale*, so he approaches the Pardoner, whom he addresses as “Thou beel amy, thou Pardoner” (318; you fair friend, you Pardoner) and asks him to “Telle us some myrthe or japes right anoon” (319; tell us some mirth or jokes quickly). His initial address to the Pardoner no doubt must have angered the Pardoner, although he does not acknowledge it. His comments to the Host at the end of the tale, however, suggest that he has not forgotten the insult

¹⁸ Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, (see note 9), 341.

¹⁹ Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, (see note 9), 340.

²⁰ Rubin, *Corpus Christi* (see note 9), 319–28.

to his masculinity. Before he begins, however, he says, “here at this alestake / I wol bothe drynke and eten of a cake” (321–22; here at this pole beside the alehouse, I will both drink and eat a loaf of bread). This statement might be missed at this point, for this is merely an ordinary eating of food. In a way it sets up an eating with meaning; however, for in this case, it is one man eating. It is not a corporately shared meal. Robert E. Nichols, Jr. observes that the eating and drinking here foreshadows both the discourse on gluttony in his sermon and of the sharing of the rioters, a mock sharing of Eucharist.²¹ But as we have seen along cultural anthropological lines, that meal is far more ambiguous than has been appreciated. The event signals his gathering his resources in order to follow his Host’s instruction to “Tell us some morale thing, that we may leere / Some wit, and thann wol we gladly here” (325–26; Tell us some moral story that we may learn some wit and that will be gladly hear). Note, however, even in the space of a few lines the Host’s change from potential “japes” to “a moral thing” is indicative of the kind of subterfuge that underlines the whole presentation of the Pardoner. Contemplating what he will tell his listeners, “some honest thing” (328; some honorable story), he actually launches into a tale that contains both elements of the morally earnest as well as a joke—one that is written into several levels of the story: the Pardoner’s own performance, and the actions of the three rioters. The Host and the Pardoner have negotiated a space where he may speak.

The Pardoner’s Prologue, seemingly his “honest thyng” (328), is actually very orthodox in its handling of theological categories and intent, but two things remain jarring. First, through the prologue, he uses the phrase “in chirches” to begin his sermon and some fifty lines later, he uses the phrase “in this chirche” (378). At the start he is dramatizing exactly what he does, suggesting that in all places he has a rote-memorized sermon, perhaps even a tract-sermon that is the basis for his method. He separates himself from his role as preacher to critique his “hauteyn speche” (330; loud speech) which he can “rynge out as round as a gooth a belle” (331; ring out as clearly as a bell rings). A couple of times, he uses the word “first” and “then,” but within some twenty lines, he begins to blur a recital of what he has said before and what he intends to present to them in their own real present time. With an intent which is “nat but for to wynne, / And nothyng for correccion of synne” (403–04; except to gain and not for correcting sinful behavior). As R. A. Shoaf has observed, the Pardoner is focused on the use of language and money, and he uses “one as a magnet for the other.”²² James F. Rhodes suggests that we

21 Robert E. Nichols, Jr., “The Pardoner’s Ale and Cake,” *PMLA* 82.7 (1967): 498–504.

22 R. A. Shoaf, *Chaucer, Dante, and the Currency of the Word: Money, Images, and Reference in Late Medieval Poetry* (Norman, OK: Pilgrim Books, 1983), 140.

not believe he is only interested in gaining money, for winning for the Pardoner is not only related to acquiring money for his services but also the position of superiority that he gains through speech.²³ Second, there is the rather obvious connection between his words as the bite of a snake: "Thus spitte I out my venym under hewe / Of hoolynesse, to semen hooly and trewe" (421–22; thus I spit out my venom under the guise of holiness to seem holy and true). Dolores L. Noll suggests that imagery throughout the performance links the Pardoner with Satan and thus points to his own "spiritual death."²⁴ Chaucer, however, seems to have more playful intent with this Pardoner; he should not be understood as being as dangerous as Langland's Pardoner, although both are successful in deceiving people. Of course, what seems apparent is that he reveals his own duplicity, but what is more interesting is that in another sense he is exactly that snake rising from the Eucharistic chalice: he brings both death and life. Certainly the rhetorical performance—the performativity of his performance—is key to understanding his own transformative art that tends toward death.

The *Pardoner's Tale* itself is set in a world of inversions. The tavern where the tale opens is referred to as the "devels temple" (470) as contrasted with the Pardoner's earlier words spoken "in chirches." Similar to the altar in a parish church, this altar table in the inverted temple too is a place of sacrifice. The broken body of Christ in this place, however, is not that body for Eucharistic sharing, which by definition indicates participation intended to create community. Instead the tavern is a place of excess, of drunkenness in particular—one of the seven deadly sins most indicative of a loss of control and one that connects with St. Paul's admonition against the corruption of the Eucharist in Corinth (1 Cor. 11). In this place, the rioters, "Our blissed Lordes body they totere" (474; our blessed Lord's body they tear apart). In a series of exempla, he notes the drunkenness of Lot, Herod's approval of severing the head of John the Baptist, the wise counsel of Seneca regarding the lack of difference between madness and drunkenness, and Adam and Eve's participation in gluttony in the Garden of Eden as evidence of the devastating consequences of gluttony and alcohol in particular. In a very real way, all of these references are standard material that one might find in a preaching manual of the day. John Bowers has provided an important study of alcohol consumption during the fourteenth century and has suggested that in this tale the presence of alcohol ac-

²³ James F. Rhodes, "Motivation in Chaucer's *Pardoner's Tale*: Winner Take Nothing," *Chaucer Review* 17.1 (1982): 40–61.

²⁴ Dolores L. Noll, "The Serpent and the Sting in 'The Pardoner's Prologue' and 'Tale,'" *Chaucer Review* 17.2 (1982): 159–62.

tually tells us a great deal about “some pervasive spiritual malaise” that Chaucer has given particular voice to with the Pardoner and his tale telling.²⁵

Gluttony, however, goes one step further relating to a mock Eucharist—one that actually begins in the tavern and moves to the woods. Readers might even wonder if there is not a critique of Harry Bailly who himself has probably assisted his customers in their own overindulgence. The Eucharistic doctrine of transubstantiation here is devalued. Here the metaphysical properties of transformation are actually no more than the action of cooks repairing meals: “Thise cookes, how they stampe, and streyne, and grynde, / And turnen substaunce into accident / To fulfille al thy likerous talent” (538–40; These cooks, how they pound and stain and grind and turn substance into accidents to complete all your desires.) The parallel is too obvious to miss. Substance and accidents are key terms in the understanding of the Eucharist, using the words of Aristotle. Several possibilities abound. If Chaucer has given us a tale in which the Pardoner is categorizing himself, his words about gluttony and his own eating tie him to the tree rioters.²⁶ Of course, the Pardoner has already confessed his own hypocrisy from the start. Minnis suggests the following idea: “they seem to transform food, the essence of food, its proper and true nature, into mere properties, i.e., qualities which are accidental in the sense of being subsidiary and incidental and hence liable to change and alternation. Put more simply, cooks can change the appearance and the taste of meat so thoroughly that its original character seems to be of no consequence.”²⁷ Those readings, however, do not really take into consideration the real meanings of the terms: substance and accidents. In transubstantiation, there is a change of substance, although the outward form accidentally remains the same. Whether this is a direct attack on transubstantiation remains unclear, so it is safe to follow a practice common in Chaucer scholarship to see the poet aware of the issue without taking sides.²⁸ What seems more likely is that the words foreshadow where the wine does accidentally remain the same in appearance although its substance has been changed into poison. Whatever can finally be said about the substance/accidents reference, readers must conclude that its resonance in the high and late Middle Ages in Eucharistic theology and debate is here transformed into what looks like a rebuke of cooks, but carries with it the shadowy ambivalence which runs throughout the Pardoner’s manner of presentation that flows into his recounting the mock eucharist.

25 John Bowers, “‘Dronkenesse is Ful of Stryvyn’: Alcoholism and Ritual Violence in Chaucer’s Pardoner’s Tale,” *English Language History* 57.4 (1990): 757–84, particularly 778–79.

26 Martin Stevens and Kathleen Falvey, “Substance, Accident, and Transformations: A Reading of the Pardoner’s Tale,” *Chaucer Review* 17.2 (1982): 142–58; here 147.

27 Minnis, *Fallible Authors* (see note 3), 140.

28 Minnis, *Fallible Authors* (see note 3), 140–41.

It is, however, in this tavern scene that we meet the issues of plague, death, and Eucharistic anti-celebration that critique fake medieval piety. The message of the Pardoner is indeed orthodox, for he too condemns the mishandling of the mass. Yet the control of meaning which he attempts to place on his narrative is not quite as totalizing as he implies.

The complex of ideas connecting the images of death, money, and the mock mass, which by both word and deed tear "Cristes blessed body" (709), redefines Eucharistic space by making it strange in the plague context of the narrative. Certainly, it is true as many critics have observed that the quest to overcome death is misunderstood by the three rioters who imagine death as materially real rather than conceptual in nature. But the death they seek to destroy is also a biological one that had gripped and was still gripping Western Europe in visible manifestations. Plague was restructuring social space, causing people to flee the cities and seek the countryside, and it was also attacking religious houses. Priests too died in approximately the same numbers as the general population as they too were literally falling victim to death through their own attempt to minister to their parish churches. Given the situation of the plague, the actions of the rioters can only be seen as folly and as possessing an inevitability about it—that they would find death. They actively seek contagion. What the Pardoner allows them to do is to enter symbolically into the space of death that the plague structures and which the mock mass crystallizes. And this death has both literal and symbolic dimensions. What seems ironic, of course, is that they do not die of the plague; they die at the hands of their sworn brothers and from drinking bottles of wine that are manifestations of their own premeditated schemes. The death of those in the village is quite real—an aspect they witness with a coffin being borne through the streets to the graveyard. The rioters' deaths come through a mock celebration of crucifixion and the eating and drinking of bread and wine. Death thus reigns supreme in the literal form of plague and the literal form of bread and wine. The death of the rioters demonstrates the futility of the tavern itself. The three rioters like the rioters of the village who frequent the tavern are doomed from the time of their oaths. Their drinking seals their fate. They too will be borne through the village streets in their own coffins. Villagers may simply assume they are victims of the plague too. We as readers, however, know their plague is the result of their avarice.

As the three rioters search for death, this quest, assisted by the words of an Old Man who desires death but cannot find it, ends as they find the gold under a tree.²⁹

²⁹ What the old man represents has been of interest to a number of critics of the tale. The following are the most representative: L. O. Purdon, "The Pardoner's Old Man and the Second Death," *Studies in Philology* 89.3 (1992): 334–39; Gudrum Richardson, "The Old Man in Chaucer's

In the traditional contexts, the gold would be a commodity of exchange and thus would possess its own power assigned it by the community. It is, of course, significant to note, once again, that many parish priests left their charges after the plague to say prayers and masses in the cities for financial reasons. In 1378, Simon Sudbury, Archbishop of Canterbury, issued a statement assigning five marks for chantry priests and six marks for parish priests.³⁰ Certainly, the increase in stipends for parish clergy suggests that the church was more desperate for their service in struggling rural parishes. And from what we know about chantries at parish churches and cathedrals, we observe that they were numerous and that a great many clergy were attracted to chantry activities. Thus in real life, gold or money contributed toward service, shifted the roles of ministry. As the desire for gold divided the three rioters, who were sworn brothers, so it divided a late medieval clergy and became the source of ridicule for those who sought easier, more lucrative compensation. In highly symbolic but yet not altogether clear ways, money was buying death and the circulation of the remembrance of death with institutionally acceptable practices such as memorial masses for the dead said by chantry priests in an attempt, as M. L. Rosenthal notes, “to purchase paradise.”³¹

Of course, the most obvious probing of the mass in its myriad and contradictory emphases is the eating of the bread and drinking of the wine. As noted earlier, the mass through gesture becomes a symbolic re-enactment of the Crucifixion event. The first rioter’s plan, “And I shal ryve hym thugh the sydes tweye / While that thou strogelest with hym as in game” (828–29; And I shall thrust him through both sides while you struggle with him as in a game), clearly recalls the numerous presentations of the events of Holy Week as processed through the Corpus Christi drama as a game.³² What would be clear is that the cut is on

er’s Pardoner’s Tale: An Interpretative Study of His Identity and Meaning,” *Neophilologus* 87.2 (2003): 323–37; Koff, Leonard Michael Koff, “The Pardoner’s ‘Old Man’: Postmodern Theory and the Premodern Text,” *Approaches to Teaching Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales*, ed. Peter W. Travis and Frank Grady. *Approaches to Teaching World Literature (ATWL)*, 131 (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2014), 171–74.

³⁰ Rosemary Horrox, trans. and ed., *The Black Death*. Manchester Medieval Sources Series (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1994), 311–12.

³¹ M. L. Rosenthal, *The Purchase of Paradise: The Social Function of Aristocratic Benevolence 1307–1485* (London and New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972).

³² Queer readings of the text suggest that there is something sexual intended in these words. For a discussion in this context, see Glenn D. Burger, “Doing What Comes Naturally: ‘The Physician’s Tale’ and the Pardoner,” *Masculinities in Chaucer: Approaches to Maleness in the Canterbury Tales and Troilus and Criseyde*, ed., Peter G. Beidler. *Chaucer Studies*, 25 (Cambridge: Brewer, 1998), 117–30; Steven F. Kruger, “Claiming the Pardoner: Toward a Gay Reading of Chaucer’s Pardoner’s Tale,” *Exemplaria: A Journal of Theory in Medieval and Renaissance Studies*

both sides, not the left side of the body alone as would be seen in typical medieval artistic renderings of the Crucifixion. Yet it also recalls the highly stylized liturgical gestures. Here the rioters are literally enacting a death—one where the victim has not asked for forgiveness as a priest would through the secret prayers of the mass.

Already drunk and with one rioter now dead, the two remaining sit to eat and drink to their own destruction. The text's use of poison lore from Avicenna may provide a possible way for understanding this element. But what is more revealing is to note again the cultural appropriation of Eucharistic ideas. Just as actual participation in the Eucharist might bring on death, so their participation in this mock event does. Whether the Pardoner intends his sermon as an object lesson to those people who participate in the Eucharist in the wrong way is unclear; the participants have been guilty of tearing Christ's body in their eating at the tavern. Certainly by their actions they have blurred the distinction between entering fully into the literal and symbolic manifestations of death through the mass. But it is also true that their mock mass celebrates death—an acquisition of gold, which has already been assigned the cultural valence of death in the text and in society at large, but also in a celebration over the death of another rioter. Just as they literally kill another rioter, they symbolically reenact it through their mass with elements which the now dead rioter has poisoned. The true Eucharist of the mass or the memorial mass for the departed symbolically re-enacts the crucifixion. The symbolic interplay between these two planes—a literal mass that might be observed in a church or chantry and the mock mass of the rioters—is blurry but is without question an act of blasphemy. That Chaucer would have the Pardoner to use such a culturally ambiguous institution should likely be seen as an extension of the Pardoner's own ambiguities, whether sexual or religious hypocrite and opportunist. The rioters found death under the tree; the two have killed the other in a mock ritual. Both intended to join in a meal of bread and wine that was both their actual food of eating and their celebration in finding the gold under the tree. The bread looked like bread and the wine looked like wine, but instead they were substantially poison. What the cooks enacted in the gluttonous eating and drinking in the tavern has now reached fruition in the woods under a tree.

One of the central issues that has been debated with some degree of fervor in the last few years is what role Cultural Studies should have in unpacking medieval texts. The uneasy negotiations between cultural forms and literary texts will likely continue to be a major issue in Medieval Studies for some time to come, particularly given that Cultural Studies operate from a decidedly post-modern perspective. The

6.1 (1994): 115–39; Carolyn Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 1999).

present attempt to re-contextualize the *Pardoner's Tale* in light of what Cultural Studies is uncovering about medieval notions of the Eucharist should be seen in this way. Read against many cultural texts, the mock mass of the tale becomes highly problematic at the least. The ecclesiastical authorities, of course, established the hegemonic discourse of the Eucharist's meaning, and they also prescribed punishments for violations. That the Eucharist could be used as an emblem to bring on death was part of the shadowy practice kept under wraps or perhaps under a pall near the altar. The Pardoner's mock mass is of the same variety. It too is kept under wraps or encased in the very language of substance and accidents which the high ecclesiastical culture used to describe as the real Eucharist. Such a reading brings out and supports the notions that have been surfacing in studies of identity politics that have dominated much of the criticism of the Pardoner and his tale.

The Pardoner's seeming orthodoxy of a portion of his tale deconstructs in the mass of death—a death he will then use to exact gold from his fellow pilgrims. As the Pardoner is ambiguous, he has chosen to present his tale in a culturally blurry space that surpasses typical satire; it creates something entirely different that critiques the heart of medieval religiosity at the same time that it intends to reinforce it for his personal aggrandizement. Just as Chaucer assigns the Pardoner as a character—himself a product of fiction—and the tale he tells composed of a second level of fiction, so priests were saying masses daily in churches and chantries in post-Plague England and priests were taking bribes for magical uses of the Eucharist. What seems clear in all of these celebrations is the power of death, but only in Chaucer's Pardoner's mind does death have the final note in the rite. Not all Eucharists are created equally, and not all rely on the cultural strains of ambivalence.

Albrecht Classen (The University of Arizona)

Death, Sinfulness, the Devil, and the Clerical Author: The Late Medieval German Didactic Debate Poem *Des Teufels Netz* and the World of Craftsmanship

When death is approaching, life suddenly proves to be a limited entity that is about to come to an end. This invites, or rather requires, virtually everyone, past and present, to take stock of his or her existence, unless one is struck by death completely unexpectedly and has no time to prepare at all. The epidemic appearance of death, such as during the Black Death 1347–1351, and many times thereafter, has led many artists and writers to engage critically and reflectively with the very essence and characteristic features of life.¹ In fact, the experience of death can be considered an important springboard to embark on intensive ruminations on the meaning of life, as I have already indicated in the Introduction to this volume. Moreover, the dramatic witnessing of death of another person or the imminent arrival of one's own death has regularly proven to be an important catalyst for final thoughts, songs, poems, paintings, or philosophical reflections, as in the case of the Roman philosopher and scholar Boethius, who composed his monumental treatise *De consolazione philosophiae* in 525 C.E. only shortly before his execution and who thereby left a legacy that has had a deep impact on us until today.

Death occurs, from a biological point of view, very naturally and is nothing but the conclusion of life. But all people are in need of meaning, and in face of the ever-present *numinosum* which makes its relevance known particularly at the time of death,² they turn to the universal discourse on life to determine the reason for and direction of one's existence. The fear of dying, which is simply a natural function of all life, forces the affected person, or those more generally involved (medical doctors, priests, relatives, friends, lawyers, undertakers, etc.)

1 This is impressively outlined and detailed by Jean E. Jost in her contribution to this volume. See also the article by Dominique DeLuca who emphasizes the dialectical approach to death as being an integral element of life in the history of late medieval art.

2 Hester E. Oberman, "A Postmodern Perspective on Mental Health, Spirituality, and Religion-Bridging Humanities and Scientific Views of Religion in the Twenty-First Century," *Mental Health, Spirituality, and Religion in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Time*, ed. Albrecht Classen. Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture, 15 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2014), 690–711.

to turn the investigative lens toward the very opposite, life.³ This means, death proves to be a highly dialectic phenomenon, insofar as its occurrence results in the intense questioning of the nature of life. Without death, there would be no need to investigate the very essence of life and would render all our activities here on earth almost irrelevant. The experience of dying thus turns, to re-emphasize this fundamental observation, into a critical catapult for all philosophical and theological examinations of human existence in the first place.⁴

The late Middle Ages experienced death in a much more massive form than perhaps ever before, though the Black Death had been around well before 1347 and had taken its great toll already in late antique Rome.⁵ The phenomenon of the 'Dance of Death,' or the 'Dance Macabre,'⁶ both in painting and in music, in literature and in philosophy, underscores most dramatically how people since the fourteenth century tried in many different ways to come to terms with death, and this in a distinctly different manner than before, especially because

3 As to the fear of premature burial as the result of seeming death, which was very prominent particularly in the eighteenth century, see the contribution to this volume by Václav Grubhoffer. An interesting document confirming this deep fear even by the authorities, see Alexander Johnson, *Relief from Accidental Death: Or, Summary Instructions for the General Institution, Proposed in the Year 1773, by Alexander Johnson, M.D. to introduce and establish, in His Majesty's British dominions, a successful practice for recovering persons who meet with accidents producing suddenly an appearance of death, and preventing their being buried alive. Re-published at the expence of the author in 1785* (London: T. Hodgson, in George's-Court, Clerkenwell, 1785); *Die von Sr. Hoheit des Herrn Fürsten-Primas der rheinischen Konföderation für das souveraine Fürstenthum Aschaffenburg angeordnete Landes-Direktion. Die am 9ten Febr. 1784 erlassene Verordnung sucht mit den Begriffen von Religions-Reiheit [sic] und Duldung, welche der Staat den einmal tolerirten Juden schuldig ist, die Pflicht, daß keiner ihrer Glaubens-Genossen aus Mißverstand seiner Religionsgesetze, zu frühe, oder gar lebend beerdigt werde, zu verbinden, statuirte demnach, daß kein Jude ... begraben werde, ohne daß, ... einen Todtenschein ausgestellt hätte ...; [Aschaffenburg den 17ten Februar 1809]; Mainz Verordnung Begräbnis Physikus (Mainz: n.p., 1809). See also Jan Bondeson, *Buried Alive: The Terrifying History of Our Most Primal Fear* (New York: Norton, 2001).*

4 See also my broader reflections on this issue in the Introduction to this volume.

5 Joseph P. Byrne, *The Black Death*. Greenwood Guides to Historic Events of the Medieval World (Westport, CT, and London: Greenwood Press, 2004); for a variety of historical perspectives, see the contributions to *Pest: Die Geschichte eines Menschheitstraumas*, ed. Mischa Meier (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2005).

6 See, for instance, *The Danse Macabre of Women. Ms. fr. 995 of the Bibliothèque Nationale*, ed. Ann Tukey Harrison with a chapter by S. L. Hindman (Kent, OH, and London: The Kent State University Press, 1994); Elina Gertsman, *The Dance of Death in the Middle Ages: Image, Text, Performance*. Studies in the Visual Cultures of the Middle Ages, 3 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010); Ashby Kinch, *Imago mortis: Mediating Images of Death in Late Medieval Culture*. Visualising the Middle Ages, 3 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013).

the consolation offered by the Christian Church did not seem to be as effective and trustworthy as before.⁷ Trying to cope with death as a most existentialist experience, late medieval poets all over Europe offered their own responses, whether we think of William Langland's *Piers the Plowman* (England), Johannes von Tepl's *Der Ackermann* (Bohemia), or Christine de Pizan's *Mutations de Fortune* (France). Even the Middle English *Pearl* poem, despite its highly allegorical approach, reflects the consequences of the Black Death, though it probably dates from a later period, that is, the 1390s, when new waves of the epidemic hit Europe.⁸ The ubiquitous presence of death in the culture of the late Middle Ages is so well established by now that we do no longer need to probe this phenomenon further, as documented by countless fifteenth-century sculptures, paintings, carvings, music, dance, buildings, or sites.⁹

Here I want to engage with a most intriguing, but little considered German satirical verse narrative which promises to shed important light on the way how witnessing epidemic death made many people reconsider the basic norms and ideals of their own lives. In a way quite similar to Langland's *Piers the Plowman*, an anonymous clerical German author penned down a fairly long text, *Des Teufels Netz* (The Devil's Net), probably some time during the Council of Constance (1414–1418). Judging from specific dialect forms in the language, the author must have hailed from Swabia, probably near the Lake of Constance. As to be expected, the narrator addresses all people of his time and presents them a literary mirror of their own shortcomings, trying to help them to reform and to turn away from a life filled with vices. Even though the narrative does not address dying and death as such in the narrow sense of the word, the entire work is determined by the intention to explain why what kinds of people have to die a horrible death leading to their external condemnation in hell, their true death.

7 See the contributions to *Mixed Metaphors: The Danse Macabre in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Sophie Oosterwijk and Stefanie Knöll (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars, 2011).

8 Andrew Breeze, "Pearl and the Plague of 1390–1393," *Neophilologus* 98 (2014): 337–41.

9 See the outstanding catalogue to the exhibition, *Himmel, Hölle, Fegefeuer: Das Jenseits im Mittelalter*, ed. Peter Jezler (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1994). For an excellent discussion, accompanied with a rich set of illustrations, see Peter Dinzelbacher, *Himmel, Hölle, Heilige: Visionen und Kunst im Mittelalter* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2002); for the role of death in late medieval England, see, for instance, Colin Platt, *King Death: The Black Death and Its Aftermath in Late-Medieval England* (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1996). The most recent survey of research on this vast and profound topic is now provided by Hiram Kümper, "Death," *Handbook of Medieval Culture: Fundamental Aspects and Conditions of the European Middle Ages* ed. Albrecht Classen (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2015), 314–28.

After all, here we encounter a clerical author who utilizes in all likelihood the experience of massive death during the past decades as a catalyst for his critical engagement with people's ways of life, which he mostly criticizes, warning them all about the dangerous consequences of wrong-doing. As to be expected, *Des Teufels Netz* interlaces life and death most intimately by way of moral, ethical, and especially religious teachings. Death itself emerges as an unavoidable given, while the direction which the soul might take afterwards, either upwards or downwards, depends extensively, on one's actions here in this life.¹⁰ This late medieval German verse narrative with its strongly didactic orientation finds intriguing parallels in Gothic sculpture reflecting the Day of Judgment on many facades and tympana of fifteenth-century churches and cathedrals.¹¹

The text has survived in four manuscripts, most complete in ms. A, Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbibliothek, cod. Donaueschingen 113 (dated 1441; 13658 vv.). The other manuscripts (B, Neustadt/Aisch, Kirchenbibliothek, MS 30, ca. 1450–1500, 7100 vv.; C, Augsburg, Universitätsbibliothek, cod. Oettingen-Wallerstein 1.3.2o 3, fol. 100r–263v, 1449, 9979 vv.; D, Strasbourg, Bibliothèque Nationale et Universitaire, cod. 2333, fols. 1r–99r, 1472, 8900 vv.; E, St. Pölten, Stadtarchiv, H 3, 95 vv, late 15th century) contain only abbreviated versions, but it is difficult if not impossible, to determine any stemma.¹²

In essence, the author examines the wide range of sins which people commit on a daily basis, and through his satirical style he obviously wants to alert his readers/listeners about their own failings and the dangers for their souls, which the devil would certainly capture and take down to hell as a punishment—a very traditional view long expounded by representatives of the Church since the early Middle ages. As scholarship has already determined, there are a number of parallels with contemporary plays treating the Judgment Day, then with the rich penitentiary literature, decalogue texts, and confessional tracts.

10 *Des Teufels Netz: Satirisch-didaktisches Gedicht aus der ersten Hälfte des fünfzehnten Jahrhunderts*, ed. K. A. Barack. Bibliothek des litterarischen Vereins in Stuttgart, LXX. Rpt. (1863; Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, 1968). For a digitized version, see <https://archive.org/details/des-teufelsnetzs00baragoog> (last accessed on Jan. 29, 2015).

11 *Homo, memento finis: The Iconography of Just Judgment in Medieval Art and Drama: Papers*, ed. David M. Bevington (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 1985); Birgitte Svane Lomborg, *The Judgement of the Dead: The Use of the Concept in Late Medieval Popular Theology as a Means of Influencing the Behavior of the Living with Special Reference to the Conflict Between Mercy and Justice*. Publications on English Themes, 23 ([Copenhagen]: University of Copenhagen, Dept. of English, 1995).

12 For a good description of all manuscripts, plus for an online link to the only available critical edition by Barack (see below), see <http://www.handschriftencensus.de/werke/1062> (last accessed on Jan. 29, 2015).

We can also identify, as possible models at least for the description of the many sins, such Middle High German didactic works as Thomasin von Zirclaria's *Wel-sche Gast* (The Italian Guest, ca. 1200) and Hugo von Trimberg's *Renner* (The Runner; middle to late thirteenth century). The closest connections, however, might be with the *Buch der Rügen* (Book of Chastisements), the German translation from 1276–1277 of the Latin tract *Sermones nulli parcentis* from ca. 1230.¹³

Very similar to the motif of the *Dance of Death*, our narrative, *Des Teufels Netz*, addresses all people of all ages, genders, social status, learning, etc. In fact, already at a brief glance we recognize how much the author had the entire world in mind and hoped to reach the broadest possible audience, alerting them through his didactic text both about the sinfulness almost all people live in, and about the subsequent danger for their souls in the afterlife. But he also takes a political stance in the larger debates within the Church, rejecting the institution of the Church Council as an expression of arrogance and hubris (96).¹⁴

The frontispiece of the Karlsruhe manuscript A (1v) illustrates dramatically what the text was all about, showing us three horrible, if not ridiculous looking devils at the top as musicians, while four others, no less grotesque, all characterized by an elephantine nose, pull the rope holding the huge net in which they have caught all kinds of people, that is, a pope and a king, a bishop and other high ranking clerics, working men and women, merchants and farmers, among many others, dragging them off to hell. As nightmarish as the scene might be, both the devils, who all make funny grimaces, and the people in the net, about half of whom look up to the devils with serious faces, appear as surprisingly realistic and detailed (especially the devils), with the human beings as

¹³ Karin Lerchner, "Des Teufels Netz," *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters: Verfasserlexikon*. 2nd, compl. rev. ed. by Burghart Wachinger et al. Vol. 9, 3–4 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1995), 723–27; Franz Josef Schweitzer, *Tugend und Laster in illustrierten didaktischen Dichtungen des späten Mittelalters*. Germanistische Texte und Studien, 41 (Hildesheim and New York: Georg Olms-Weidmann, 1993), 249–325. Otherwise, there is not much research on this text; but see now Georg Hofer, "Wenn der Teufel an den Sünden leidet: Zum satirisch-didaktischen Gedicht 'Des Teufels Netz,'" *Vergessene Texte des Mittelalters*, ed. Nathanael Busch and Björn Reich (Stuttgart: S. Hirzel, 2014), 15–25. While he acknowledges that this verse narrative deserves much more attention, he seems not to have engaged with it extensively enough, since he never comments on the really interesting aspects in the second half, which this article will illustrate in detail.

¹⁴ When I refer to an individual section addressing a profession or a social class, I give only the page number where that section begins. When I refer to specific text passages, I will give the full verse count. As to the conciliar movement in the late Middle Ages, see, for instance, the contribution to *Die Konzilien von Pisa (1409), Konstanz (1414–1418) und Basel (1431–1449): Institution und Personen*, ed. Heribert Müller and Johannes Heimrath. Vorträge und Forschungen, 67 (Ostfildern: Thorbecke, 2007).

servants or victims of master death.¹⁵ While the devils are presented in a most vivacious mode, playing music and pulling the net, the people caught as the devils' prey demonstrate little emotions and seem to be completely passive, not resisting their enemies' endeavors, obviously resigned to their destiny, that is, eternal condemnation in hell.¹⁶ Undoubtedly, the artist enjoyed the opportunity to give free rein to his/her phantasy and created a most dramatic and lively, horrifying and yet also ridiculous scene that is intended both to entertain and to make the viewer reflect upon his/her own existence and the threat of the imminent death affecting all and everyone here on earth (Fig. 1).

The author does not address death in specific terms, which would be almost impossible, but his entire narrative is predicated on warnings about the horrible afterlife as a consequence of wrongdoings here on earth. At first the narrative voice is that of an hermit, who engages a devil in a lengthy discussion about how he misleads people and how those themselves provide all the ammunition for the devil to take them down to hell. In the course of this account, the author forgets about the projected figure of the hermit and resorts to the first person singular, thus giving more explicit voice to his own perspectives. The devil explains to the hermit that he is using a huge net to catch people like fish: "Ich tuon ain sege machen, / Da ich alle die welt inn vach" (238–40; I make a net in which I catch the entire world). Thus he indicates how much the entire narrative will reflect on the reasons why people from all walks of life and from all stages of age have to end up in hell.

Des Teufels Netz proves to be intriguing for a number of specific reasons that might not be so apparent at first. The clerical author addresses a universal theme that resonated throughout the entire late Middle Ages and beyond, and his laments about people's shortcomings are nothing new for his time; in fact, the entire corpus of medieval religious literature is filled with criticism of people's sinful behavior almost ad nauseam. The huge role which the devil plays in the warnings by the Church regarding people's evil behavior, pertains to one of the mainstays of medieval culture; otherwise there would not have been any reason to depict hell so ubiquitously and impressively. Herbert Vorgrimler points out, for instance, the great authority figures in this discourse, Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure, then the highly popular author Caesarius of Heisterbach (*Dialogus miraculorum*), and the Inquisitor Stephen of Bourbon, all of them followed by a stream of subsequent clerical authors addressing the very same topic for hun-

¹⁵ <http://digital.blb-karlsruhe.de/urn:urn:nbn:de:bsz:31-28668>; urn:nbn:de:bsz:31-28668 (last accessed on Jan. 29, 2015).

¹⁶ Anke Ehlers, *Des Teufels Netz: Untersuchung zum Gattungsproblem*. Studien zur Poetik und Geschichte der Literatur, 35 (Stuttgart, Berlin, et al.: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1973), 32–34.



Fig. 1: Frontispiece fol. 1v of the Karlsruhe manuscript: Badische Landesbibliothek, Cod. Don. 113

dreds of years to come. Pope Boniface VIII stipulated in his notorious bull *Unam sanctam* in 1302 that no soul would ever find salvation outside of the Catholic

Church, which hence required the complete submission under priestly authority.¹⁷ We are clearly dealing with an intensifying process by the Church authorities to impose its control over the population at large and to resort to the catalyst of 'fear' to succeed in that endeavor. The "Todesdrastik" (the dramatic presentation of death), as Alois M. Haas called it, proved to be a most influential strategy,¹⁸ and *Angst*, as Peter Dinzelbacher emphasized, worked thus as an extremely effective tool in that effort.¹⁹

If we studied *Des Teufels Netz* in light of these purely theological observations, we would have to dismiss it fairly quickly as a standard, if not trite clerical treatise in dialogue form, criticizing people from all social classes and age groups. However, we could correlate it with the famous Humanist treatise by Sebastian Brant, the *Narrenschiff*, from 1494, in which virtually every member of human society is ridiculed and evaluated satirically; and then we should contextualize it further in the broader theological literature of the late Middle Ages, whether we think of the Old French farces, the German Judgment plays, Spanish comedic texts, or early English drama.²⁰ We can certainly agree with Anke Ehlers that the author borrowed many elements and features from the very popular penitentiary and confessional literature,²¹ and he shared much with the increasingly popular Easter plays with their scenes depicting hell,²² but there are additional aspects that deserve further attention. More than almost anywhere else the author included a true mirror of all people of his world and discusses virtually every social status, every profession, all ages, and both genders in an as detailed fashion as possible, almost unparalleled even in late medieval literature. In addition, he engages in a highly dramatic strategy to arouse fear of death and hence of hell, projecting most horrible images of what would await the miserable soul in the afterlife. Finally, this is not simply a sermon text, but a skillfully developed dialogue poem that demonstrates fascinating parallels with the 'Dance of Death' motif.

17 Herbert Vorgrimler, *Geschichte der Hölle* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1993), 207–13.

18 Alois M. Haas, *Todesbilder im Mittelalter: Fakten und Hinweise in der deutschen Literatur* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1989), 174–79.

19 Peter Dinzelbacher, *Angst im Mittelalter: Teufels-, Todes- und Gotteserfahrung. Mentalitätsgeschichte und Ikonographie* (Paderborn, Munich, et al.: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1996). He does not seem to know, like many other scholars dealing with this topic, of *Des Teufels Netz*.

20 Many of those other genres with their emphasis on death and the role of the devil are explored by the other contributors to the present volume.

21 Ehlers, *Des Teufels Netz* (see note 16), 147–52.

22 Ehlers, *Des Teufels Netz* (see note 16), 133.

Let us first consider the social dimension of this ultimately really fascinating and eye-opening text which sheds so much light on the concrete conditions in the late-medieval world. The author, following the tradition of didactic literature,²³ does not hesitate to address virtually everyone in this world, both clerical and lay people, voicing severe criticism, mockery, disrespect, and even contempt for most of them, and this from his own, religious position. After having discussed the Ten Commandments, the writer turns to the institution of the Church Council (96), before he begins with his long list of representatives of individual groups in society. First he takes into view the popes (99), the cardinals (102), the bishops (106), and many other members of the huge hierarchy of the church organization. Even hermits living in the woods are not exempt from his criticism (177), and we even hear of the evils committed by the beguines and beghards (188; 193). Moreover, he does not hesitate to ridicule and expose the beggars who populate the urban landscapes throughout late medieval Europe (199).

Having covered everyone within the Church organization, the author takes aim at all lay people, beginning with children (209), young maids (214), widows (218), and wives (221). The next section comprises the male side, starting with emperors and kings (225), prince electors (236), dukes (239), counts (243), barons (248), and many others below them. The author moves down the social ladder in a very systematic fashion, mentioning knights and their servants (255), soldiers (261), cellarers and cooks (264), city administrators and clerks (267), hunters (273), gate keepers (274), kitchen boys (275), waiters (276), stokers (277), guardsmen (278), mayors (279), merchants (284), tailors (289), bakers (293), and the many other craftsmen and workers in late medieval cities. Beyond those, we encounter chapters on apothecaries and physicians (314), surgeons (320), and barber surgeons (322).

Every urban community, however, also knew of female matchmakers (326), but the author then quickly moves on to other jobs, such as weavers (334), tanners and cobblers (335), masons and carpenters (338), and so forth. Of general interest would also be the reference to the waste remover (363), who helped to keep the city clean from all human and other waste, a very critical task for a world in which there was no sewer system.²⁴ However, apart from a brief line re-

23 See the contributions to *What Nature Does Not Teach: Didactic Literature in the Medieval and Early-Modern Periods*, ed. Juanita Feros Ruys. Disputatio, 15 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008); for a critical review of the relevant research on German didactic literature in the Middle Ages, see my article in this volume, "Thomasin von Zerclaere's *Der Welsche Gast* and Hugo von Trimberg's *Der Renner*: Two Middle High German Didactic Writers Focus on Gender Relations" (205–29).

24 Research in this area is still badly lacking, but see Daniel Furrer, *Wasserthron und Donnerbalken: Eine kleine Kulturgeschichte des stillen Örtchens* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchge-

ferring us to the danger of the devil who would take down to hell all those who were neglectful in their duties (11463), the author does not display any specific concern with their sinfulness and does not describe what this would actually constitute in detail. Similarly, all those working as fools, or entertainers (370), would not have to worry because in all their swearing and poking fun even at God they would not really transgress basic Christian rules.

By contrast, those employed as sacristans (375), and especially the priests' concubines prove to be prime targets for the devil's persecutions, since he can drag many of them down to hell as his assured victims. Noble ladies of every possible rank (383) belong equally into the devil's net, since they are victims of their own vanity and arrogance. From here the author's attention turns to the peasants (391), woodsmen (395), shepherds (397), and then he suddenly also addresses prostitutes (401), whom he regards with greatest disrespect and contempt, since they all deserve to enter hell without any hope for dispensation at any rate and without hope for redemption. Other people who appear in this 'dance of death' are robbers and murderers (404), innkeepers (406), and textile dyers (411). Conspicuously, teachers, nurses, metal workers, and a number of other professions are missing, but the author could not deal with everyone employed in one way or the other at his time. Nevertheless, *Des Teufels Netz* thus proves to be an astounding mirror of social reality in a late medieval south German city, giving excellent insight into the vast variety of professions and social roles.²⁵

Without going too much into detail, all this information finds its stunning parallel in the amazing *Hausbuch der Mendelschen Zwölfbrüderstiftung zu Nürnberg*. The wealthy Nuremberg merchant Konrad Mendel had created a foundation for needy old craftsmen in 1388, and since 1425/1426 each individual member was portrayed in the *Hausbuch*, showing us ever since a wealth of specific craftsmen and their tools depicted in impressively realistic portraits. It was continued until 1806 and contains a total of 857 illustrated folios depicting 765

sellschaft, 2004); Susan Signe Morrison, *Excrement in the Late Middle Ages: Sacred Filth and Chaucer's Fecopoetics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Olaf Wagener, ed., *Aborte im Mittelalter und der Frühen Neuzeit: Bauforschung – Archäologie – Kulturgeschichte* (Petersberg: Imhof, 2014); Gerhard Jaritz, "Excrement and Waste," *Handbook of Medieval Culture: Fundamental Aspects and Conditions of the European Middle Ages*, ed. Albrecht Classen (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter 2015), 406–14.

²⁵ As to the huge role which the urban space played especially since the late Middle Ages, see the contributions to *Urban Space in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times*, ed. Albrecht Classen. *Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, 4 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2009).

different craftsmen and their tools.²⁶ It would be a worthwhile research project to compare this *Hausbuch* with *Des Teufels Netz* in terms of what we can learn about the history of craftsmanship, but this would be the topic for another paper.

Only at the closure of this long dialogic narrative do we get a more theoretical explanation why the devil is here on earth, and what his workings will mean for the deceased. Indeed, here the author develops a panopticon of the culture of death, as it was probably well known all over Europe at that time. The hermit informs us that once the devil approached the Lord, asking him for the favor to grant him the right to weed the evil people out of the garden of the good ones (13160). By relying on a yarn, which bird catchers normally used, he would collect all those to whose soul he was entitled. For the hermit this would be a good clean-up, as he comments (13165), while wise people would know how to avoid the danger and turn to a virtuous life. Undoubtedly, this is a highly representative treatise on sinfulness and virtue from a religious perspective, most characteristic of the teachings by the Church.²⁷ Resorting to a textile metaphor, the author identifies the net as a fabric held together by yarn and buttons with which sinners can be caught. These sinners are those whose life is aimed against the rules of God and lead a “widerwertig leben” (13173; disgusting life).

Despite all the concrete elements pertaining to people’s ordinary lives which this preacher discusses in amazing detail, the ultimate purpose consists of outlining specific religious concerns about wrongdoing, sinfulness, and their consequences in the afterlife. Those sinners strive in word and deed against God (13175), and thus they condemn themselves to eternal suffering in hell. The devil has been given free rein by God, allowing him to roam this world and grab everyone, whether lay person or a cleric, taking him or her down to hell. Avoiding charges of bias as a priest, the author at first points out that many monks and nuns have been culprits and have thus ended up in hell as well. While the frontispiece of the manuscript A showed us seven devilish figures both celebrating the catch of sinners and pulling them in by means of the net, now the author identifies Lucifer’s (here not named) servants, the Seven Deadly Sins: pride, sloth, greed, gluttony, envy and hatred (seen as one),

²⁶ This most valuable manuscript is today kept in the *Stadtbibliothek Nürnberg*, Amb. 217.2°; see the excellent webpage <http://www.nuernberger-hausbuecher.de/index.php?do=page&mo=2> (last accessed on Jan. 29, 2015); see also the print edition *Hausbuch der Mendelschen Zwölfbrüderstiftung zu Nürnberg: Deutsche Handwerkerbilder des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Wilhelm Treue. 2 vols. (Munich: Bruckmann, 1965); for a useful introduction to the whole topic, see Wolfgang Metzger, *Handel und Handwerk des Mittelalters im Spiegel der Buchmalerei* (Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 2002).

²⁷ Schweitzer, *Tugend und Laster* (see note 13).

wrath, and lust (13195–229).²⁸ Of course, these were all well known at his time, and it was an easy strategy by the author to correlate the fear of death with those global sins. In other words, here we confront an almost archetypal aspect, a common cultural phenomenon. As Richard Newhauser explains: “Without some echo in human self-analysis, without the ability to appear as valid classificatory system of evil to generations of commentators on moral psychology, the capital vices would not have achieved the recognition they enjoyed in the Middle Ages and far after that period, as well.”²⁹

As much as the anonymous author explicitly condemns all those sins, he also reveals a subtle humility and sympathy because in his sweeping condemnation of all people, from high up at the level of the pope and the emperor down to the beggar and the orphan (13231–234), he acknowledges that no one would be exempt from sinfulness; hence the author levels all people in face of death and identifies them systematically as easy victims of those Seven Deadly Sins. This implies that the individuals on the lowest levels would not have to feel so terrible regarding their own failings since even the highest ranking cleric, the pope, proves to be liable and prone to worldly seductions. However, the author also pursues rather sarcastic and pessimistic views insofar as he identifies the drastic consequences of people’s wrongdoing here on earth. Lying and stealing are so rampant that the danger level rises so much that the entire country might be destroyed: “Bis das ganz land verdirt” (13261; until the entire country would be devastated). War and violence appear to him as so wide-spread that the peaceful individual might not even have a good chance to survive. And those who kill each other in military operations, would go down to hell without having given their last confession, meaning that they would be condemned for eternity to suffer in hell.³⁰ Ironically, as the devil admits, when God grants people a better life on earth (“guoti jar,” 13868; good year), the devil makes them feel jealousy of each other, which thus turns them into his own captives after all since they squander the divine gifts.

Employing a social critique, the author has the devil say that the rich and powerful tax the poor badly and do not even leave them any hair or skin

28 *The Seven Deadly Sins: From Communities to Individuals*, ed. Richard Newhauser. Studies in Medieval and Reformation Studies, 123 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007).

29 Richard Newhauser, ed., “Introduction,” *In the Garden of Evil: The Vices and Culture in the Middle Ages*. Papers in Mediaeval Studies, 18 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2005), vii–xix; here xii.

30 As to the broader discuss on this topics, see the contributions to *War and Peace: Critical Issues in European Societies and Literature 800–1800* ed. Albrecht Classen and Nadia Margolis. Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture, 8 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2011).

(13284–87), which threatens them with famine. By the same token, merchants and bankers impose high interest rates when they lend money, and thus become guilty of usury (13294). From here he turns to the large crowd of gamblers, thieves, liars, creditors, and many others who through their actions are automatically designated for the devil's net without fail. Over and over again, the devil identifies those individuals who through their actions abandon their salvation and are caught as well, being forced to enter hell. Both mercenaries and profiteers fall into this category, and so do board game players, public entertainers, comedians, public speakers, and all kinds of people of the street (13325–45).³¹

Not enough with having listed all professions, the author goes on with having the devil identify an ever widening circle of sinners who all must submit themselves to this dangerous net and thus enter hell. Any kind of misdeed, evil rumor, lies, cheating, giving false advice, mocking others, and any sort of wrong-doings are all listed as the sure way toward hell (13346–79). Even simple weakness of character or lack of moral or ethical ideals is subject to being condemned by God, pushing all those guilty of vanity, laziness, lack of religious devotion, aggressive behavior, miserliness, grumpiness, disorganization, deception or false manipulation, wastefulness, and so forth, into the devil's net (13371–89). Only those who are truly just would be spared (13390–95), but in light of the almost endless list of human shortcomings, of which the priest apparently proves to more than just aware, very few individuals seem to be safe from hell. According to this preacher, the vast majority of people are tragically destined for hell and will have to suffer endlessly in the afterlife. While most people in the Middle Ages were certainly very familiar with this rhetoric, the extent to which this author identified even the most minute sin and deviation from the path toward Christian ideals as guaranteed to end up in hell seems almost extreme, though still not unexpected for that time period.³² The horrifying vision of hell serves him, as it did many others of his colleagues, to warn people and to urge them

31 For a detailed study of the many different kinds of people on the road during the Middle Ages, see Ernst Schubert, *Fahrendes Volk im Mittelalter* (Bielefeld: Verlag für Regionalgeschichte, 1995). Although he draws much information from literary and didactic text, he does not seem to be familiar with *Des Teufels Netz*.

32 Eileen Gardiner, *Visions of Heaven and Hell Before Dante* (New York: Italica Press, 1989); see also eadem, "Hell, Purgatory, and Hell," *Handbook of Medieval Culture: Fundamental Aspects and Conditions of the European Middle Ages*, ed. Albrecht Classen (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2015), 653–73. For an excellent presentation and discussion of hellish scenarios in the Judeo-Christian world, see <http://www.hell-on-line.org/TextsJC.html> (last accessed on Jan. 29, 2015).

to change their way of life. In his extremely conservative viewpoint, there is hardly anything people can do in their lives for entertainment and enjoyment which would not be cast as completely condemnable and worthy of eternal punishment.

The author knew, however, that a mere sermon would not be enough to rattle his audience and to awaken and reject all worldly temptations. So he turns the narrative around and has the devil address the parish altogether, encouraging them all to do whatever they just enjoy doing, to pursue love affairs, whether the involved are monks and nuns or not. The members of monasteries are encouraged to expel their abbots, the unjust should pursue their goals and suppress the just, the clerics should steal the alms, young people should pursue all their pleasures and ignore Christ's teachings. The members of the Church are encouraged to sell the holy oil, to abuse the peasants and take their money, sell all sacramental services, cuss and swear false oaths, dishonor God and His saints, destroy the foundations of monasteries by taking away the financial funds, and hence do any kind of imaginable misdeeds to please the devil who wants to fill his net with as many souls as possible (13396 ff.). Keeping especially rich people in mind, he encourages them: "Witwan und waisan / Sond ir uff das hinrost zaisen; / Ir sond arm lüt verderben / Und machend rich iwer erben" (13479–82; Push the widows and orphans to the very back, make the poor people suffer, and make sure that your own heirs will be rich).

The author finally allows Christ to speak up, responding to the devil's long monologue, basically agreeing with his characterization of people who in a vast majority have not paid attention to God's commandments, have neglected all rules, and have mocked God Himself. In fact, Christ is portrayed as extremely angry: "Wie zornlih Cristus sprach" (13522; how angrily Christ said). For Him there are still some just individuals, good Christians, in other words, who are entitled to enter heaven with Him. All the others, however, he turns over to the devil and grants him to take them all down to hell, "Wan si hand verlorn das ewig leben" (13538; since they have lost eternal life). He does not want to have anything to do with them and dismisses them altogether, proving thereby to be the revengeful God, as in the Old Testament. The author here adds another psychological strategy, portraying in impressive detail what this suffering in hell would really entail, characterized by endless and horrible suffering of the most extreme kind:

Da hand si angst und not.
Si tuond ir zen ze samen bissen
Und in selb das har us rissen;
Und in sie giessen swehel und bech,

Damit so werdends niemer grech;
 Darzuo brinnen und braten,
 Also tuot ir guottat geraten. (13542–48)

[There they will experience fear and suffering.
 They will clench their teeth
 and pull out their own hair.
 The devils will pour sulfur and pit into them.
 But they will thereby not gain justice.
 They will burn and fry,
 and in this way they will pay for their deeds.]

Both Christ and the devil comment on the final situation one more time respectively, and there is only a shimmer of hope for the just, while the horrible torture chamber of hell awaits the unjust, as the devil emphasizes at the end: “Ich tuon den minen laid und ungemach” (13651; I cause suffering and sorrow to those who belong to me). It is, altogether, a truly horrifying scenario which the author projects, almost as daunting and terrorizing as Dante was able to do with his *Divina Commedia (Inferno)*, even though the latter created a universal perspective of the most dramatic kind that belongs, ultimately, to a different literary category altogether, of course.

Let us next examine how the author projects hell in general terms and specifically as the location of punishment for individuals. After a lengthy lament about the decline in Christian virtues even among the contemporary popes, the author warns the sinners on St. Peter’s throne that they would “brinnen und braten” (3127; burn and fry), a formula he will use many times throughout. With respect to the prelates and their punishment in hell, he adds that they are to burn and sweat (perhaps to bleed) for hundred thousand years compacted into one hour, and this for eternity. He voices great horror about this punishment: “O wie ist in denn das so gesund, / So kain end an sollicher pin ist!” (3524–25; Oh, that’s really healthy for them, when there is no end to such suffering). Although the author-preacher addresses the highest ranking clerics, he never hesitates to name them as what they are in his eyes: “Wann si sind all boeswichte” (3874; Since they are all evil-doers). With respect to abbesses and nuns, the devil emphasizes sarcastically that the stay in hell would not be pleasant for them: “Des ist in zwar nit gar gesund” (5221; That is not really healthy for them). Their suffering as punishment for their evil deeds would last for eternity, and all actions here on earth would find its complementary torture in the lower world (5226–27). However, regret and repentance could alleviate that suffering,

although they then still would have to spend a long time in purgatory (5230), a dominant perspective in all of late medieval Church teaching.³³

Considering the evil deeds by the emperors, the author warns them about their hubris and threatens them, as is his preference throughout, with the punishment of being fried and boiled in hell (7342–43). However, the devil also considers in this case the possibility that the ruler might have issued just judgments, dedicated himself to God, given his confession to a priest, he might fare well as any other good person and look forward to heaven in his afterlife (7347). In other words, the author demonstrates a certain willingness to discriminate in light of various types of behavior by individuals here in their human existence. As to kings, we learn, once again, that they would burn and fry in hell in the case of misappropriation of their office (7475), but would enjoy the bliss of heaven if they tried hard to do good, corrected the wrong, granting freedom to all in the name of God.

However, the more the author turns his attention to the various professions, both in the courtly administration and in other areas, the less he reflects on the various types of punishments in hell. He has much to say about wrong-doing by city mayors, for instance, but he concludes his comments, through the devil's voice, by identifying their two worst shortcomings, vanity and greed (9007). The devil confirms that they will be his victims for sure, irrespective of any bribery attempt (9014), but he does not inform us specifically what will happen with them as a punishment. Nevertheless, he reemphasizes all the time the basic impression of hell, being a location of extreme heat, glowing hotly, where the sinners will fry and burn (9098–99; with respect to evil merchants). Only if people turn away from their vices and accept Christ's teachings, sharing their goods with the needy others, might they gain eternal life for their souls. But ironically, lending money for interest continues to be an important economic operation, as he admits indirectly, yet he urges his readers to leave this business to the Jews, about whose destiny, ending in hell for this sinful behavior, he does not care (9137–38), as was very common throughout the entire Middle Ages.³⁴

Sometimes the author includes variations of the image of hell, such as in his discussion of tailors, whom he threatens with a bath in liquid resin and sulfur

³³ The most seminal study on this topic was presented by Jacques Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (1981; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984). See also Eileen Gardiner, "Hell, Purgatory, and Hell" (see note 32).

³⁴ For a comprehensive discussion of the way how Christians viewed Jews in the Middle Ages, see Hans-Werner Goetz, *Die Wahrnehmung anderer Religionen und christlich-abendländisches Selbstverständnis im frühen und hohen Mittelalter (5.–12. Jahrhundert)*, 2 vols. (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2013), vol. 2, 411–571.

(9268). Evil bakers are only threatened with severe consequences in the afterlife, but there are no specifics regarding the situation in hell for them (9365–67). Millers have to be aware that the devil's net is waiting for them, but there might be exceptions, as the devil remarks, since some might lead a good Christian life and can thus expect to enter heaven (9456–57). Increasingly, the devil's voice becomes the preacher's since he hands out threats regarding bad and promises regarding good behavior, such as in the case of the fishermen (304). The devil's net thus increasingly transforms into a mere metaphor without major significance, since we hear more and more of individuals who demonstrate good Christian values and would not be condemned to hell, as in the case of the haberdashers (309) or the medical doctors and apothecaries (314). The preacher demonstrates considerable knowledge of their professional activities and outlines rather specifically how they operate in their daily lives. He warns them to stay away from sinfulness, that is, from making extra money by prolonging people's sickness, but he admits that there are numerous individuals who are ethically upright and who do not have to follow the devil and get caught in the net (10101–03). Even in the case of prostitutes and go-betweens, the devil himself considers the possibility for them to go to Rome and ask the pope for his forgiveness. Otherwise they would have to enter hell, but there they would only face the danger of being taught a stern lesson by the devil (10476). Ultimately, the author only admonishes his audience to confess their sins and to do penance in order to avoid the punishment by the devil in hell, as we hear regarding the tanners and cobblers (10674).

However, the more the preacher considers the various craftsmen and their profession, the more the devil concedes that there might be good people who carry out their jobs honestly and to the satisfaction of their customers, as in the case of the masons and carpenters (338). Although he does not like to do so, the devil declares that he has to let many of them go because he is not entitled to them (10766–68). One of his most preferred words in this context proves to be “*biderman*,” such as in reference to the goldsmiths, among whom there are, as the devil confirms, quite many upright citizens, pious, devoted to their profession, trustworthy, and reliable, as this word implies (10924). As to furriers, for instance, he comments that there are many among them who abstain from wrongdoing and do not cheat their customers, hence are protected from the devils' net and thus do not have to fear the burning fire in hell (11105).

As the analysis clearly reveals, the preacher-author is primarily concerned with the question whether the various craftsmen create good products that are worth their price. If those fail, then this is attributable to shoddy work, attempts to cheat the customer by saving money and good quality material. This in turn brings about bad complaints, damage, loss of time, and loss of honor, if it

might not even cause death: “Und also möcht er ain bringen umb sin leben, / Der ain bösen sattel für ain guoten tuot geben” (11205–06; thus he might endanger one’s life who gives a bad saddle instead of a good one). In that case the devil only threatens with his net (12208), but no further details about hell and eternal punishments are given. Nevertheless, the fear of death and hell serve the preacher exceedingly well to call upon his audience to be mindful of their duties and obligations, both as rulers and administrators, as clerics and as craftsmen. Being aware of the devastating consequences of their potentially bad behavior, they all will, as the author hopes, feel remorse and then reform. He does not shy away from criticizing both members of the Church, like himself, and the wide range of people living in a city.

Basically, the author addresses quality control and admonishes all the workers to pay close attention to the details and materials of their craft. Referring to those who make cross-bows, he emphasizes, for instance, that a poorly constructed weapon could bring about the man’s death who had relied on it and cannot defend himself against his enemies in the case of an attack (11290–94). People who are in need of a ferry to cross a river must have the guarantee of a good boat and the ferryman’s skills in his job (365), but the opposite is often the case. For the devil this then proves to be of profit since he will capture more victims in his net when those people commit crimes or cheat others (11575–78). To his delight he has observed many cases when ferrymen overload their vessel with people, go on the water even when the weather is highly inclement, and when the ferry leaks and takes in water, and all this because of their greed (11580–88).

There are many other specific groups of people whom the author criticizes through the devil’s voice, which ultimately provides us with an extraordinary overview of the diversity of individuals within society. The only group that is completely absent here is the one of old people in retirement. Otherwise, the preacher targets virtually everyone, threatening them with the eternal condemnation of hell where they would suffer unspeakable torments for their wrongdoings during life. He displays deep anger also about some of the typical vices within the Church, such as simony and usury (13406), certainly a curious combination, then breaking the vow of chastity among nuns and monks (13408–10), among many other transgressions and shortcomings. The devil finally emerges as Christ’s servant who avenges his lord’s suffering and insults at the hand of His people. Since they did not want to pay attention to the priest’s teaching, they are now facing eternal condemnation and suffering in hell (13650–55).

Aside from the theological arguments, which are regularly peppered with satirical comments by the devil, the author has created a fascinating panorama of his contemporary society, but here seen through the lens of vices as they occur

on a daily basis on all social levels.³⁵ As much as there are endless possibilities to commit sins in one's own life and as part of one's activities, as much there are penalties waiting for all. However, as we learn at the beginning, the higher the social rank, the greater the danger for the individual to fall into the devil's trap (his net) and thus to suffer in hell. The pope, above all, faces the greatest temptation because he is supposed to be the central role model for all people, representing God here on earth (2842–50). At the conclusion Christ speaks up in a most angry manner, representing the judging God of the end of time, while the devil self-assuredly assumes the role of His instrument, inflicting suffering and torments to those who had disobeyed Christ (13652). Justice is the name of the game carried out by the devil who avenges the countless wrongs done to his lord, so serving as His assistant for the purpose of punishment: “Und wirst, herr, an in gerochen” (13654; Lord you will be avenged).

While Dante had projected an infernal cosmos structured by the types of sins committed here on earth, the anonymous author of *Des Teufels Netz* proceeds in a very pragmatic fashion, going from the top of the social ladder down to the lowest rungs. He has his eyes mostly toward people's sinfulness here in this life, detailing most impressively what sort of transgressions might be possible in the respective positions and professions. But he also keeps his audience's attention turned toward the afterlife, using the threat of eternal hell as a convenient instrument to scare everyone into obedience.

Even though the writer was still deeply steeped in late medieval culture, we can recognize fascinating parallels with the much later satirical text by the Humanist Sebastian Brant, his *Narrenschiff* (1492), insofar as there we also confront a large panorama of different types of people whom the poet identifies as fools throughout.³⁶ But Brant did not arrange his sections according to social status or professions; instead he relied on a system based on types of foolishness and wrongdoings. We might also think Thomas Murner's *Narrenbeschwörung* (1512) or more specifically of Hieronymus Bosch's famous “The Last Judgment Triptych” from ca. 1485–1505,³⁷ but here the focus rests only on the types of punishments which the various souls have to suffer in hell.

35 Franz-Josef Schweitzer, *Tugend und Laster* (see note 13), 256–57.

36 Sebastian Brant, *Das Narrenschiff*. Nach der Erstausgabe (Basel 1494) mit den Zusätzen der Ausgaben von 1495 und 1499 sowie den Holzschnitten der deutschen Originalausgabe. Herausgegeben von Manfred Lemmer. Third, expanded ed. Neudrucke deutscher Literaturwerke, 5 (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1986).

37 Renate Trnek und Martina Fleischer, *Das Weltgerichtstriptychon von Hieronymus Bosch* (Rosenheim: Rosenheimer Verlagshaus, 1988). See also the images available online with description, <http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Weltgerichtstriptychon> (last accessed on Jan. 29, 2015).

Altogether, irrespective of his highly conservative viewpoint, the author of *Des Teufels Netz* created a remarkable literary panorama of his society within the framework of dying and the role of the devil to punish the deceased in hell. There are intriguing parallels to other allegorical writings, especially the many different types of chess allegories, first created by the Dominican Jacobus de Cessolis (ca. 100), then translated into various vernaculars, such as Konrad von Ammenhausen's *Schachzabelbuch* (1337).³⁸ Late medieval authors apparently delighted in satirizing their contemporaries, either from a humorous perspective or with serious moral, religious, and ethical concerns in mind, as is the case in our text and so in *Die acht Schalkheiten* from the second half of the fifteenth century.³⁹ However, *Des Teufels Netz* proves to be a unique literary work because of the unparalleled extent to which a vast number of individuals in their social rank and profession are presented, all subject to death and hence to the workings of the devil. It is another outstanding example of the great literary productivity resulting from the experience of death, especially in the late Middle Ages.

We could easily expand our discussion from here and contextualize *Des Teufels Netz* within the history of late medieval art, especially if we think of the plethora of sculptures, paintings, frescoes, and stained glass windows depicting the Day of Judgment, the throngs of sinners, all regularly identified by their specific social attributes. In many fourteenth- and fifteenth-century tympana we discover masses of people about to enter the mouth of hell, and they clearly represent the vast gamut of the entire citizenry from high and low. However, the author of our didactic text fully employed the wide range of opportunities given by a narrative and discussed at greatest length what professions and social statuses there existed at his time. His intentions were clearly religious, warning people of their sinfulness and hence of death and then the horrors of hell. Yet, for our purposes, we recognize here an extraordinarily fascinating and insightful document of the social reality in late medieval urban and courtly life that definitely deserves much more attention.⁴⁰

38 Ulrich Müller, "Reimreden," *Von der Handschrift zum Buchdruck: Spätmittelalter, Reformation, Humanismus: 1320–1572*, ed. Ingrid Bennewitz and id. *Deutsche Literatur: Eine Sozialgeschichte*, 2 (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1991), 220–24; here 223–24.

39 Hans Rupprich, *Das ausgehende Mittelalter, Humanismus und Renaissance 1370–1520*. *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur: Die deutsche Literatur vom späten Mittelalter bis zum Barock*, 1 (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1970), 302–05.

40 In this regard, we can only agree with Hofer, "Wenn der Teufel an den Sündern leidet" (see note 13), 24, who, closely following the argument by the first editor of this text, Barack (1863), underscores the great cultural-historical significance of this text.

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Pro Defunctis Exorare: The Community of the Living and the Dead in Jean Gerson's Sermones de Omnibus Sanctis and de Mortuis

In loving memory of my mother and best
friend, Marion E. Taylor: June 4, 1921 —
January 26, 2015

In a prior article, “‘L’aage plus fort ennaye’: *Scientia mortis*, *Ars moriendi* and Jean Gerson’s Advice to an Old Man,” I argued that contrary to Philippe Ariès, Paul Binski, and even Brian McGuire, at least Jean Gerson among late medieval clerics viewed dying not as a uniquely individual experience, but as a fundamentally communal preparation for the final embarkation of the Christian *viator*.¹ This study, also touching upon the *Scientia mortis* and the *Ars moriendi*, but concerned more particularly with Gerson’s sermon material, will examine the chancellor’s views not of dying, but of death itself. It is perhaps fitting to recall that the chancellor had admonished Philippe de Mézières, to whom he had addressed his letter in 1402 forwarding *Scientia mortis*, the third part of his *Opusculum tripertitum*, to look to the future, recalling his own favorite quotation from St. Paul, “nostra conversatio in coelis est” (Phil. 3:20). At the same time, Gerson also comforted Philippe with the thought that “y vault mielx tart que jamais exequiter cecy”: it is better to leave the world late than never.² Hence, Gerson’s last words of advice to Phillippe were from Lamentations 3:26: “bonum est praestolari cum silentio salutare”—it is good to await with silence the salvation of the Lord.

As Gerson would describe the present life in his fifth sermon on All Saint’s, “we are in prison, in captivity, in exile in this mortal world, beyond our first home, beyond the city and kingdom of paradise which we struggle to reach, and must struggle, since in the words of Hebrews 13:14, “here we have no abiding

1 *Old Age in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Interdisciplinary Approaches to a Neglected Topic*, ed. Albrecht Classen. Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture, 2. (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 407–19.

2 *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Mgr (Palemon) Glorieux, 10 vols. (Paris: Desclée, 1960–1973) [henceforth Gl.], 2: 76–77. Citations to the *Opera Omnia*, ed. Louis Ellies Du Pin, 5 vols. (1706; Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1987), will be simply Du Pin followed by volume and column number.

city, but we seek the one to come.”³ Toward such end, the laws of God should not seem too harsh, remembering Virgil’s assessment of Brutus who executed his own son for conspiring to restore Tarquinius Superbus: “Vincit amor patriae, laudumque immense cupido.” (Aen. 6:823; Love of country and boundless passion for honor triumphed). The quotation seems apposite as well as an allusion to the hardships suffered by Aeneas on his sojourn to establish a new homeland. But as Gerson goes on to explain, the march toward the heavenly city is fraught with dangers and difficulties, made worse and more perilous by the obstacles thrown in the viator’s path by the proximity of Satan, who seeks to impede his path home,⁴ even as he littered the path of the Israelites with hardships. Only death can bring us closer to home, there to receive Paradise, not according to Gerson as the Saracens say, replete with eating, drinking or luxuriating, which concept seems to pertain more suitably to dumb beasts than to men,⁵ but characterized by the overflowing blessings of the soul.

Of course, consistent with the orthodoxy of the period, while death represented the embarkation to Paradise for those who died in grace, the journey was not necessarily direct, but for many people lay through the tribulations of Purgatory. And just as the Church lent its communal support to those preparing for the embarkation, it extended its support to those who had already embarked but had yet to reach their destination. How important a role this represented in the chancellor’s concept of the Church is evidenced by his sermon, *Diligite iustitiam*, delivered to the *Parlement de Paris* at the opening of its session circa November 12, 1405, addressing the University strike attending an alleged violation of its privileges by the State. The chancellor lamented to the esteemed body how:

... on cesse de leçons et de sermons en toute l’Université de Paris et à Paris. Entendez ycy quell mischief c’est; par non recevoir les biens qui viennent des leçons et de sermons, mil et mil pechies se laisseront à faire, mil et mil biens pour les vifz et pour les mors s’en faroint, mil et mil ames se partiront plus tôt su purgatoire ...⁶

3 “Nos qui sumus in carcere, in captivitate, & in exilio mortalis hujus mundi, extra principalem patriam nostrum, extra civitatem, & Paradisi Regnum ad quod pervenire tendimus, & tendere debemus, qui secundum Apostolum. Hebr. XIII.14. *Non habemus hic manentem civitatem, sed futuram inquirimus.*” DuPin III: 1541–51; here 1541.

4 “Sed humani generis inimicus alium mittere cogitavit inimicum, ad impediendum iter Regni coelorum, qui tanto esset pejor, & periculosior, quanto inimicus familiaris & tectus magis nocet quam alius ...,” DuPin, III: 1541–51; here 1546.

5 “Patet etiam Paradisum non esse in comedendo, in bibendo aut in luxuriando, quemadmodum dicunt Saraceni; talis enim Paradisus potius spectaret ad mutas bestias, quam ad homines ...” DuPin III: 1541–51; here 1550.

6 Gl. 7: 598–615; here 613. Latin version is found in DuPin, IV: 642–55; here 652–53.

[... lessons and sermons have ceased throughout the University of Paris and in Paris itself. Consider here what mischief this is; for the benefits of lessons and of sermons are not received, thousands and thousands of sins are ignored, thousands and thousands of benefits for the living and for the dead are abandoned, thousands and thousands of souls depart instead for purgatory.]

In his sermon *Veniat pax*, delivered to the Court on November 4, 1408, Gerson was again to display his concern for souls in purgatory and his confidence in the influence of the Church militant on their fate. Addressing the peers of France as the hostilities over the schism worsened with France declaring neutrality, and the murder of the Duke of Orléans at the instigation of Burgundy's John the Fearless, the chancellor made a plea for princely aid to the Church and their avoidance of civil war.

Indeed, Gerson insisted, peace is of benefit even to the souls in Purgatory. For certainly the souls in Purgatory are dependent on charity, which is patient and benign, not quarreling in the cruelty of vindictive ire or affliction, but the mother of peace, nay rather every virtue, not seeking its own advantage nor its own honor, but universal convenience and respect. And what is of greater public convenience than peace. Gerson therefore concludes that any soul in Purgatory desires peace, demands peace, and contemplates peace. And whoever lives in a contrary fashion is not to their liking, nor their convenience, nor their liberation; but is to their dissatisfaction, their injury and their impediment. How so their impediment? Because in the absence of peace, during periods of civil strife, the living make fewer gifts, entreaties, and prayers for the dead. Indeed, the souls in purgatory tremble fearing that instead of entreaties, the living will generate curses; for the divine services of the Church, destruction; for alms, pillage; and for fasting and abstinence, gluttony, drunkenness and rape, and innumerable other evils prejudicial to the poor souls in Purgatory. Who can imagine such a state of affairs is pleasing to them who depend upon the charity of the living? In light of this dependency, asks Gerson, what sort of soul would there be in Purgatory, that could desire the prejudice of other souls, nay, indeed one's own, that peace be hindered across the earth through vindictiveness, hatred and cruel affliction? In truth, as one, the souls in Purgatory think thoughts of peace, rather than thoughts of such affliction, and say and pray, if through the true Faith they could open the ears of our hearts: *Veniat pax!*⁷

7 "Pax enim est etiam ad utilitatem & commodum uniuscujusque animae quae est in Purgatorio, quoad tertiam causam. Certum est, unamquamque in Purgatorio esse in charitate. Et *Charitas* (ut dicit Apostolus I Cor. XIII.3.) *patiens est & benigna*, non quaerens crudelem vindictam in ira, aut in afflictione. Et ratio est, quia Charitas est Mater pacis, immo omnium virtutum; non prop-

Both of these examples are particularly interesting, because they proceed from Gerson's understanding of how the *generalis influentia Dei* affected, and was affected by, visible reality in a sort of symbiosis between higher and lower spheres, within a sector more appropriately part of the "corps civile et mystique," rather than the *corpus mysticum ecclesiae*, or more generally, the "corps mystique des hommes."⁸

While the care of souls in purgatory therefore should be of interest even to the civil government, it was much more within the influence of the Church. Here, within the general context of reformation *in capite et membris*, Gerson in the manner of other reformers such as Nicolas de Clamanges (1363/4–1437), felt that the *ecclesia* had fallen into negligence of the care of souls, both living and dead. This pertained not only to the *ecclesia docens*, but to the *congregatio fidelis* as a whole. For this reason, Gerson preached a series of sermons to the people of Paris in the Church of St. Severine, consisting of a mix of exhortation and primer, delivered in French for the benefit of those who were uneducated or whose Latin was inadequate.⁹

In the first of the sermons, *Sanctum est*, based on 2 Machabees XII: 46, "Sancta et salubris est cogitatio pro defunctis exorare ut a peccato solverentur," Gerson maintains that we should consider before all terrestrial things, laying aside every mundane, vain or carnal thought, the status of the dead, directing our attention to the place where they are who abide in the hard prison of burning Purgatory, in sad torment and penance; where we ourselves are in this world among the companionship of mankind and other friends; and where we will be in the future, certainly in Paradise, in glorious joy and happiness, where

rium quaerit commodum, nec proprium suum honorem, sed commodum & honorem commune. Et quod et magis commune commodum, quam pax? Ideo concludo necessario, quod qualibet anima Purgatorii desiderat pacem, postulat pacem, cogitat pacem. Et quicumque opposito modo vivunt, non est hoc ad eorum delectationem, aut commodum, aut liberationem; sed est ad earum displicentiam, nocumentum, & impedimentum. Quomodo impedimentum? Quia non fiunt tanta bona, preces, & orationes pro eis. Immo est timendum ne pro precibus fiant maledictiones, pro divino Servitio Ecclesiarum destructiones; & pro eleemosynis rapinae, atque pro jejuniis, & abstinentiis, gulae, ebrietates, ac feminarum raptus, & alia mala innumera in praejudicium pauperum Purgatorii animarum. Quis ergo opinari posset res tales eis placere? Quae est anima Purgatorii, quae velle posset in aliarum animarum praejudicium, immo suiipsius, ut pax impediatur super terram per vindictam, per iram, aut crudelem afflictionem? Revera unaquaeque earum potius cogitat cogitationes pacis quam talis afflictionis. Dicitque & precatur, si per veram Fidem nostri cordis aures aperire velimus: *Veniat pax.*" DuPin IV: 625–42; here 633.

⁸ See G. H. M. Posthumus Meyjes, *Jean Gerson – Apostle of Unity: His Church Politics and Ecclesiology*, trans. J. C. Grayson. Studies in the History of Christian Thought, 94 (Leiden, Boston, and Cologne: Brill, 1999), 300–01.

⁹ "Et sera en francois, pour les simples, car ceulx de latin en ont acces." Glorieux 7: 1031.

they pray for us. And if we consider these three things, we shall surely find in accord with mercy, justice and utility, that it is a holy and salubrious project to pray for the dead.¹⁰ Promising to address twelve principal questions in his next sermon of the set, he lays out the goal in this first sermon of addressing four areas of concern: first, the nature of prayer; second, the manner by which prayer for the dead has effect; third, the value of prayer in general; and last the value of specific prayers.¹¹

For our purposes, that second consideration is most important. Having addressed the futility of praying for those in Hell, including unbaptized infants, Gerson generally proscribes such entreaties except perhaps that the condemned not have to endure so much or so harsh a punishment when their friends and other good people pray for them rather than do nothing. Such prayers avail nothing though a solace to the living parents and friends. Truly, prayers should not be said for those who can never reach glory.¹² Prayers for those in Purgatory, however, always have effect, when they are said for those who are in grace, but who need to make satisfaction, and cannot make it for themselves and it is just and fitting that someone be able to make satisfaction on their behalf.¹³

Indeed, such prayer proceeds from faith, just as in the case of prayer on behalf of the living. So it is necessary that the prayer be raised on behalf of those in

10 “Eslevons a present nostre pensee sus toutes choses terriennes, hors de toutez autres pensees mondaines, charnelles ou vainez; envoyons nostre pensee considerer l'estat des mors; pensons au lieu ou il sont, c'est en la prison dure et ardent e purgatoire, en douloureux tourment et penitance. Pensons ou il furent, c'est en ce monde avec nous en compagnie de lignage et d'autre amictie; pensons ou il seront, c'est en paradis, en glorieuse joye et felicite, ou ilz pourront pour nous. Se bien avisons ces trois consideracions, nous trouverons clerement selonc misericorde et iustice et utilite que pensee sainte et salutaire est pour les mors oroyson faire.” *Glorieux* 7: 1031–40; here 1031. The Latin version is found in *DuPin* III: 1551–58.

11 “Et contenra quatre parties: la premiers, quelle chose est oroyson; la seconde, comment pour les mors vaut oroyson; la tierce, de la valeur d'oroyson en general; la quarte, de la valeur d'oroyson en especial.” *Glorieux* 7: 1031–40; here 1031.

12 “Dirons en oultre que oroison ne proufict point aux dampnes ne aux enfans mors sans batesme, se non que les dampnes n'on pas tant a souffrir quant a une maniere de peine quant leurs amis vivans et autres font bonne oroysons comme se il n'en fesoient nulles. Et si est ung soulas pour les parens et amiz vivans, vray est que on ne fait point oroyson pour eulx quar il ne peut jamais venir a gloire.” *Glorieux* 7: 1034.

13 “Telle oroyson a tousiours son effect, car elle se fait pour celui qui est en grace et qui ha besoing de satisfaction et qui ne la peut faire pour soy, mais il ha deservi que aultrui la puisse faire pour luy.” *Glorieux* 7:1034. In some respects, the sense may be clearer in the Latin version: “Haec etiam oratio ex majori procedit Fide, quam ea quae fit pro viventibus: est enim necesse, cogitationem elevare ad Purgatorium credendum, & quasi ipsum per Fidem videndum.” *DuPin* III: 1554.

Purgatory in faith and as if by themselves. Such prayer somehow binds those currently in Purgatory, and will be assigned to them after they are in Paradise, being favorably received by God, and availing much, though not as a new merit, but as a merit precedent by virtue of love, being made on account of the desire those loving have, and on behalf of another, in the manner that God loves his saints.¹⁴ This prayer is most essential and pressing in as much as those in Purgatory cannot pray during the interim of their punishment. Such prayers petition that their suffering and danger not be too long, unless fulfillment of their testament be prolonged for just cause. These entreaties warrant that for those who pray, after their lives the prayers of others and of the Church be lifted up in like manner, since one good turn demands another, and mercy should be accorded him who shows mercy.¹⁵ Intercessory prayers should emanate from charity, preferably being made on behalf of those far separated from us, not expecting the same nor thanks for what we do, nor remuneration in this world by the person himself.

These entreaties satisfy the great obligations that bind the living to the dead, on account of the various benefits the living have received, whether of nature, of fortune, of inheritances, of benefices, of Scripture, of the Church or of hospitality.¹⁶ Effectual prayers give consolation or joy to some type of Angels who have custody of the dead, and as is believed, reveal them, and those for whom they are made are consoled, and know that which the living have done for them.¹⁷ Such petitions induce those who make them to be wary of sin, and to accomplish penance expeditiously, and to guard against committing any acts that would incur such affliction. Such prayer when manifest also provides an example to others to believe in the afterlife. Such devotion better induces in him who prays a contempt of this life and a disposition for the next, remembering the state of those who lived a short time before in a state of various mundane de-

14 "Telle oroyson oblige aucunement ceulx de purgatoire a rendre le pourquoy quant ilz seront en paradis et que leur oroyson sera moult agreable a Dieu et moult valable; et se non par merite novel se sera par le merite passe et par la vertus d'amour qui fait que les amans ayent ung vouloir et fasent l'un pour l'autre, comme Dieu aime les sains." Glorieux 7: 1035.

15 "Telle oroyson dessert que celui qui la fait soit pareillement aydie apres ceste vie par l'oroyson des autres et de l'eglise; une bonte l'autre requiert et misericorde se rent a ceulx qui font misericorde." Glorieux 7: 1035.

16 "Telle oroyson fait acquicter obl[ig]ation grande que les vifz ont aux mors pour divers biens recus par eulx, soient de nature, soient de fortune, soient heritages ou benefices ou livres ou eglises ou hospitaux." Glorieux 7: 1035.

17 "Telle oroyson donne consolation ou joie en aucune maniere aux anglez qui gardoient les trespases; et est assez a croire que ilz revelent tellex oroysons a ceulx qu'ils gardoient et les consolent, et ainsi cognoissent ce que les vivans font pour eulx." Glorieux 7: 1035.

sires, and exhausted all but good deeds, and bore only mercy, which alone accompanies the dead, as St. Augustine said.¹⁸

The third part of this sermon addresses prayer in general, suggesting *inter alia* that usually, it is better to pray for many than for one, and for another rather than oneself. The fourth section deals with the value of prayers by sinners, which Gerson concludes have *meritum congruum*, albeit not *meritum condignum*.¹⁹ As to prayers made by sinners on the authority of another who is in grace, pursuant to ministry or obedience, they benefit the one who directed them, whence Gerson concludes prayers for the dead will benefit those who entreated and provided for them.²⁰

The second sermon of the set, based on the beatitude, *Beati qui lugent*,²¹ asserts that the mournful heart liberates those in the prison of Purgatory. The principal manner is through prayer, as we have already discussed. Those who feast and imbibe, who gossip and cavort, who pursue their trades and shun the churches, those who prefer listening to slander, or trifles, or dirty talk rather than preaching, these do nothing to liberate their friends in Purgatory; nor do they manifest care or memory of their friends, nor of their liberation; they offer to them deaf ears, they turn their backs on their consideration, just as though they scorned them. Those who believe, and are desirous of earthly things, impede their friends, rather than help them as they ought.²² Best to be renewed

18 “Telle oroyson induit plus celui qui la fait a mespriser ceste vie et tendre a l’autre en remembrant l’estat de ceulx qui naguies vivoient comme lui en divers desirs des choses mondaines, et tout est passe se non bien fait et par especial se non misericorde qui seule accompagne les mors comme dit saint Augustin.” Glorieux 7: 1035.

19 “Oroyson du pecheur profite par une maniere de congruite venant de la misericorde de Dieu qui ne nous rent point selon nos merites mais fait habunder sa grace: quoniam ipse cognovit figmentum nostrum; il congnoit nostre nature et fragilite.” Glorieux 7: 1039.

20 “Oroyson de pecheur fait principalement par l’auctorite d’aultrui qui est en grace comme par maniere de ministere ou obeyssance, vault a celui qui l’envoye.” Glorieux 7: 1039.

21 Glorieux 7: 549–60. The Latin version appears in DuPin III: 1558–67. Although the two versions are similar, and follow roughly the same outline, they are not identical.

22 “Quid aliud vult ipsa quam bibere & comedere; confabulari & ludere; sequi cauponas, & fugere Ecclesias; audire potius detractionem, aut vilia, & immunda colloquia, quam Predicationem. Sc faciendo non liberantur amici alicujus de Purgatorii carcere. Hi non ostendunt se habere magnam curam aut memoriam de amicis ipsorum, nec de eorum liberation, qui ita furdam aures eis praebent, dorsum cogitationis ab eis vertunt, veluti si eos dedignarentur.” DuPin III: 1560. The French version contains the same point, albeit in a different part of the sermon: “Que vault autre chose Plaisir mondain fors boire et mengier, flaver et jouer, suyr taverne et fuyr moustier, ouyr plus tost detraction ou vilains et ors parlements que predication? En faisant ainsy on ne delivre pas ses amis de la prison de purgatoire; ceulx ne monstrent que iceulz ayent grant cure ou memoire de leurs amis ne de leur delivrance qui leur font ainsy la sourde

in the many tenuous benefits for the dead, that the will be sated with mundane desires. For it is patent that earthly desire imprisons the dead, inasmuch as it retards their liberation. But the mournful heart liberates its friends from harsh prison, even as mundane desires hold them captive. Gerson then proceeds to address twelve questions regarding the dead, as he promised to do in the first sermon.

The initial question deals with the location and nature of Purgatory in fairly standard fashion. The second maintains that the dead in Purgatory know the benefits and prayers made for them, as much by the revelation of the Angels who have custody of them, as by the alleviation of their suffering.²³ In the third consideration, Gerson suggests that they most benefit from the support of the holy Church who most merited it in this life, and who did much good and deserve that prayers be said for them. In the fourth, the chancellor states that such prayers benefit only those in Purgatory who failed to fulfill their penance, but nonetheless died in a state of grace.²⁴ In the fifth he addresses the benefit accorded by the prayers of sinners. Those of persons in mortal sin, who pray of their own accord and volition as private individuals, benefit neither the dead nor themselves.

If however, such a one prays as a minister of God and of the Church, the prayers will benefit him for whom he prays, presuming the person living or dead is in a state of grace. Nevertheless, it is more or less certain, *ceteris paribus*, that the prayers of some good person are more useful both to the dead and the living, than those of an unjust person.²⁵ In the sixth consideration, Gerson ad-

oreille, qui leur tournent le dos de la pensee comme s'ilz les contredaignassent." Glorieux 7: 552.

23 "Dico quod sic, tam per Angelorum revelationem, qui ad eas confortandas saepius descendunt, quam etiam per hoc quod percipient earum tormenta diminui." DuPin III: 1563.

24 "Dico quod hoc solum proficit his qui sunt in Purgatorio, & qui non in hoc mundo eorum compleverunt poenitentiam, quamvis mortui sint in statu gratiae." DuPin III: 1563.

25 "Dic mihi, valent-ne pro mortuis opera facta a peccatoribus, & in peccato mortali? Responso. Distinguite: aut is qui est in peccato mortali orat pro mortuis ex sua voluntate, & proprio motu, ac ut persona private; & in tali casu orationes ejus nec sibi profunt, nec aliis. Auto rat ut minister Dei, & Ecclesiae; quemadmodum si malus Sacerdo Missam suam diceret, aut obsequium alicujus mortui, & in hoc casu oratio proficeret illis pro quibus fieret; militia enim Ministri non impedit bonitatem, & bonum opus personae quae bona est: sicut si bonus aliquis Dominus eleemosynam suam faciat per manum famuli fui iniqui, bonus ille Dominus nec perdit, nec perderet propter hoc eleemosynae suae meritum. Aut ille qui est in peccato mortali, orando pro mortuis, orat nomine, & ut minster singularis alicujus personae, & privatae, quae tamen in statu gratiae est, sive viva fuit, sive mortua: in tali casu oratio illius qui esset in peccato mortali, illi prodesset personae; supposito quod dictum est, ipsam esse in statu gratiae; alias enim pro-

dresses the issue of decedents who ordained that some things be done for their penitence or salvation, yet the executors do nothing, whether on that account they will be impeded or retarded from glory. Repeating the story of the infamous servant in the days of Charlemagne, who despite his master's instructions to give his horse to the poor in the event of his death, kept it for himself, only to be visited by the soldier's ghost complaining of his suffering in purgatory, though the servant was carried down to Hell, the chancellor concludes that it best to fulfill one's Testament in one's own lifetime and personally, or commit it to those who will diligently and legitimately take care to fulfill it.²⁶ In the seventh section, he addresses what prayers are of most value, surely the entreaties of those in Paradise, and then those said primarily from charity. Prayers for diminution of one's own punishment are not of great value.

From these considerations, he concludes it is not altogether advantageous or useful to oblige others through benefits held or received, but it would be well to consider monks or any other cleric, who receives only a nominal remuneration for sustenance.²⁷ In the eighth consideration, the question is whether if I expend money for a Mass, will it not be entirely for my Mass? Gerson responds that it should be understood a donation and general intent suffice. And just as some wish to say concerning Indulgences, that in fact, who gives more should expect more support: equally, the executor ought ask God, that inasmuch as he knows him to be obligated to another, to distribute the aid, not to dismiss the act.²⁸

The ninth section deals with the interesting question of whether Indulgences can be acquired for the dead. The chancellor responds, no, for indulgences are ordained only for those who submit themselves to the mercy of the Curia, from the present until death, but not thereafter; and days of Indulgence apply to days connected with penance. Therefore it is well that penance be furnished generally, since absolution from punishment and guilt frees one from purgatory, and a man can desire it, ask for it, and have benefit of it if he is so inclined. Even

ficeret minime. Nihilominus tamen certum est quod, ceteris paribus, oratio bonae alicujus personae multo est utilior & mortuis, & vivis, quam oratio personae injustae." DuPin III: 1563.

26 "Et ideo secure factum est, implere Testamentum suum in vita sua per semetipsum, aut committere illis qui diligenter, & legitime current adimplere." DuPin III: 1563.

27 "Per quod patet, non esse omnino lucrum, & utile se pro aliis obligare pro beneficiis tenendis, aut recipiendis ab alterius pecuniis: & ideo bene confiderent Religiosi, & omnes alii Ecclesiastici." DuPin III: 1564.

28 "Hic intelligi debet donantis & recipientis intention, & sufficere debet generalis intention, sicut voluerunt quidam dicere de Indulgentiis, quod scilicet qui plus dat, majorem debeat expectare profectum: & pariformiter rogare debeat Deum, quod secundum hoc in quo scit me esse obligatum pro altero, mea divider velim suffragia, nec meam dimittere necessitate." DuPin III: 1564.

if in the last hour of death a person beseeches grace, that he be freed from Purgatory, his prayer will be favorably heard.²⁹

The tenth through twelfth questions are fairly straightforward: Those who accomplish rightly and discretely imposed penance will be free from Purgatory; the best aids to the souls are the sacraments and the Mass, alms, prayers, fasting and abstinence. Finally, the twelfth consideration, *inter alia*, answers affirmatively whether the dead for whom we pray today, when later in heaven may pray for us, if we are in purgatory.³⁰ Gerson concludes the sermon with two more reasons those of mournful heart are blessed, to-wit: a sad heart frees from the harshness of judgment and pleasantness provides sense or the act of feeling; but mundane desire brings death and takes away beneficial consolation;³¹ the second is that the heavy heart feels and perceives that who is flogged in this life for penance, avoids the death of Hell in the next.³²

Appropriately enough, the third and last sermon is on Ecclesiasticus XXXVI:10, *Memento finis*,³³ which not only concludes Gerson's cycle, but also takes us, "by commodious vicus of recirculation," as Joyce would have said, back to where we began as well, with Gerson's *Scientia mortis* and his letter to the elderly Philippe, in which *inter alia*, he reminds him of the story of St. Anthony, who growing melancholy during his devotions when he contemplated the sorry state of the world, was visited by an Angel, who directed him to think of himself,³⁴ even as were the emperor and St. John the Almsgiver in Jaco-

29 "Possunt-ne acquire Indulgentiae pro mortuis? Responsio. Teneo quod non: qui Idulgentiae ordinatae sunt pro his qui sumittunt se Curiae misericordiae, que hic est, & durat usque ad mortem, non autem post mortem: & sumuntur dies Indulgentiae pro diebus poenitentiae injunctae. Et properea bene sit, dando Poenitentiam in generali sic: 'Omnia benefacta tua sint in remissionem peccatorum tuorum.' Dico etiam quod absolutio a poena & culpa, liberat a Purgatorio, & eam homo desiderare potest, impetrare, & ea uti, si habita fuerit. Etiam si in postrema hora mortis persona petat gratiam, ut liberate sit a Purgatorio, oratio sua exauditur." DuPin III: 1564.

30 "Si mortui, post quam sunt in Paradiso, orent pro nobis, & praesertim pro illis qui eis adiutorio fuerunt, dum essent adhuc in Purgatorio. Dico quod sic: & propterea segura res est orare, aut orations procurare, vel jejunare, aut dare eleemosynas, vel alia bona facere pro defunctis." DuPin III: 1565.

31 "Finiendo ergo, & vos exhortando, tangam breviter duas alias rationes simul, propter quas cor dolorosum per poenitentiam est beatum, & mundane voluptas est ipernenda: quoniam cor dolorosum liberat a rigoroso Judicio, & jocundum dat sensum seu sentiendi actum: voluptas vero mundane dat mortem, & bonam aufert consolationem." DuPin III: 1565.

32 "... cor dolorosum bene sentit, & percipit quod qui hic per Poenitentiam vapulat, mortem evitabit Inferni." DuPin III: 1566.

33 *Glorieux* 7: 690–98; Latin version, DuPin III: 1567–73.

34 *Vitae Patrum* 15.1, PL 73: 953.

bus de Voraigue's *Legenda aurea*, "sire pansez a vous. Pansez a vostre fin. A vostre mort ..."³⁵

And having thence returned as Gerson to our point of embarkation, what has the excursion demonstrated? Two points of departure by Gerson from what might be deemed strict orthodoxy should be immediately apparent. First, the chancellor makes no mention of the Church's treasury of merits, though the doctrine had been proclaimed by Pope Clement VI (1342–1352) in the bull *Unigenitus Dei Filius* in 1343.³⁶ Second, and perhaps because of this, Gerson is highly skeptical of indulgences for those in purgatory. Granted, an authoritative decision allowing the living to purchase and apply indulgences to loved ones suffering for unsatisfied sin was only proclaimed in 1476 by Sixtus IV (1471–1484).³⁷ Nevertheless, in 1300, Boniface VIII granted a plenary indulgence to all pilgrims who had died while on pilgrimage either en route to or in Rome, as well as to those having a firm conviction to so do, but being prevented.³⁸ Essentially, this papal action purported to mandate the immediate release from punishment of certain souls in Purgatory. Earlier, Alexander Hales, Bonaventura, and Thomas Aquinas had theorized such authority, but it had never been exercised. It appears obvious that thereafter, various pardoners had undertaken the sale of indulgences, sug-

35 On which see my discussion, "L'aage plus fort ennaye': *Scientia mortis*, *Ars moriendi* and Jean Gerson's Advice to an Old Man," note 1, above; here at 417–19.

36 Heinrich Denzinger, *Enchiridion symbolorum: definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum*, ed. Johannes Umberg, 26th ed. (1854; Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 1946), 550–52.

37 In a Bull in favor of the church of St. Peter Xanctonensis, August 3, 1476: "Et ut animarum salus eo tempore potius procuretur, quo magis aliorum egent suffragiis et quo minus sibi ipsis proficere valent, auctoritate apostolica de thesauro Ecclesiae animabus in purgatorio existentibus succurrer volentes, quae per caritatem ab hac luce Christo unitae decesserunt ac quae, dum viverent, sibi ut huiusmodi indulgentia suffragaretur, meruerunt, paterno cupientes affectu, quantum cum Deo possumus, de divina misericordia confisi ac de plenitudine potestatis concedimus partier ac indulgeus, ut si qui parentes, amici aut ceteri Christi fideles pietate commoti pro ipsis animabus purgatorio igni pro expiation poenarum eisdem secundum divinam iustitiam debitarum expositis, durante dicto decennio pro reparation ecclesiae Xanctonensi(s) certam pecuniarum quotam aut valorem iuxta decani et capituli dictae ecclesiae aut nostril collectoris ordinationem dictam ecclesiam visitando dederint aut per nuntios ab eisdem deputandos durante dicto decennio miserint, valumus ipsam plenariam remissionem per modum suffragii ipsis animabus purgatorii, pro quibus dictam quotam pecuniarum aut valorem persolverint, ut praeferatur, pro relaxation poenarum valere ac suffragari." Heinrich Denzinger, *Enchiridion symbolorum* (see note 36), 723a.

38 *Antiquorum habet*, February 22, 1300, in *Bullarium Anni Sancti*, ed. H(ermanus) Schmidt (Rome: Libreria Apostolica Vaticana, 1949), 35. See discussion in Jacques Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (1981; Chicago: University of Chicago, 1984), 330–31.

gesting that they could be applied to release souls from Purgatory, a practice condemned at the Council of Vienne in 1312.³⁹

Gerson, as so often in his ecclesiology, tends to reject such legalistic formulations, nor does he regard purgation as a simple accounting procedure, some problem in inequities carried tediously to an inevitable nil, as Faulkner might have phrased it.

True, he acknowledges what Le Goff has identified as a reversibility of merits, popular among thirteenth-century beguines, a sort of “system of solidarity between the living and the dead instituted in an unending circular flow, a full circuit of reciprocity.”⁴⁰ But it is not simply this reciprocity that demands the solidarity of the living and the dead. For the living owe the dead their support for all the benefits they provided the present generation as well. Most important, the living and the dead represent one community, the *corpus mysticum ecclesiae*, all of whose members have a common destiny and warrant communal spiritual support. And against the view of Ariès, who suggests that the spontaneous solidarity of the Gallican and Mozarabic rites was replaced in the Roman mass with a sort of spiritual apartheid, separating the dead from the body of the Church by making them the object of intercession,⁴¹ Gerson interestingly suggests that the prayers and works of the living for the dead are not so much intercessory, as fiduciary.

That is, the living when they pray “for” the dead, do so in the sense of praying on behalf or in the stead of the dead, and such prayers will be reckoned to the account of the decedent once he reaches paradise. Indeed, while Ariès and Le Goff both see the introduction of Purgatory in the twelfth century as largely reinforcing the individual character of late medieval ideas about death and the climatic aspect of the death bed, what emerges from Gerson’s opera is a view of dying somewhere between the lifelong preparation of the *De spiritualibus ascensionibus* of Gerard Zerbolt of Zutphen and the popular late medieval *Artes moriendi*. This was coupled with an altruistic concern for the departed.

³⁹ See Steven Ozment, *The Age of Reform 1250–1150: An Intellectual and Religious History of Late Medieval and Reformation Europe* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1980), 217 n. 64, based on Jonathan Sumption, *Pilgrimage: An Image of Medieval Religion* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 1975), 294. It should be noted, however, that several of the decrees of the Council could be read as applying not to indulgences promising release from purgatory, but from punishment.

⁴⁰ *The Birth of Purgatory*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (1981; Chicago: University of Chicago, 1984), 357.

⁴¹ Philippe Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death*, trans. Helen Weaver (1977; New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 148–56.

While Ariès asserts that this latter dimension emerged only with the affectivity of eighteenth- and nineteenth century Romanticism and with the renewal of the emphasis on the communion of the Church Triumphant, the Church Suffering and the Church Militant, and while Ariès finds this to be characteristic of the ancient rites which he asserts were displaced by the Roman mass, the late Middle Ages witnessed already a strong affective form of the culture of death. This conjunction in Gerson of what some scholars would consider inconsistent and anachronistic elements is attributable to Gerson's view of the primacy of Heaven rather than of Purgatory. Gerson warned of the undesirable detour of Purgatory, but it was exactly that: a detour on the believer's inexorable journey to Paradise. Le Goff himself recognized the possibility of such a focus on Heaven, and conceded that it would alter the energizing and organizing force of the tripartite system as he had envisioned it. But for the chancellor, such an emphasis on Heaven dove-tailed naturally with his insistence on the inviolate integrity of the Church and of the inviolable integrity of the individual personality.

In the last analysis, Gerson envisions the present life as exile, during which we make preparation for the homeward journey. Some pilgrims have the foresight to make better provision than others, but unlike the ant and the grasshopper, those of the community failing to adequately equip for the sojourn are not merely abandoned. Rather all work together, that together all will reach the final shore. For the essence of the Church in Gerson's schema, was a potential, a semen, which over time develops and reaches its full realization, that the Church may be a *congregatio perfecta*, guided by the *influxus* radiating from Christ to the Church. As he would describe in his sermon on the ascension delivered to the newly elected Pope Alexander and his court in 1409,⁴² Satan's goal was to frustrate the augmentation of the Church Triumphant, the heavenly host, with the faithful of the Church Militant. Those who persevere in faith to the end, however, are destined to the Church Triumphant. They are forever a part of the Ecclesia Christi, and *portae inferni, non prevalebunt adversus eam*: the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it (Mat. 16:18). For those safe within that Church, surely to die is gain.

42 *Pax hominibus*, Glorieux 7: 763–78; DuPin II: 141–53.

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“And Thus She Will Perish:” Gender, Jurisdiction, and the Execution of Women in Late Medieval France

Most of the late medieval criminal records found in the municipal archives of the southern French city of Toulouse are predominantly masculine affairs. Male judges and lawyers presided over the trials and sentencing, a notary recorded the depositions and testimonies, and the majority of the cases involved men bashing in the brains of other men or brawling about drunk in taverns or in the city streets. The documented proceedings seemingly acknowledged women as either the victim of a crime or wife of a participant, relegated into a marginalized and submissive legal role. Even prescriptive law codes from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries only mention women extensively in a section that describes the severe customary punishments for adulteresses: known as “*current nudi*”; it involved forcing the lovers to run naked through the city streets as a means of public shaming.¹ The survival of a particular jurisdictional dispute from 1428, centered on a female defendant named Clare de Portet, then, causes some pause for reflection.² It is impossible to know with certainty if the case exists today because of sheer happenstance, or if its contemporaries recognized it as something exceptional and important, but regardless, the events surrounding Clare de Portet in fifteenth-century France provide a unique opportunity to consider a more nuanced connection between gender, criminality, and the spectacle of public executions.

On May 28, 1428, the royal seneschal of Toulouse found Clare, from the nearby town of Portet, guilty of adultery with Bertrandus Savari, a soldier working as a sailor on the local Garonne River during a lull in war. The two were also deemed culpable of the murder of her husband, whose dead body they hid

¹ Adultery was, in fact, one of the earliest criminal decisions the city’s capitols made in 1176. Archives municipals de Toulouse-AA 1: 33 (March 1176). Hereafter referenced as AMT. Here, the city capitols decided that a cheating wife lost all claims to her own and her husband’s property. In the customary law, it was described as: “nam pluries vidi quod currebant villam nudus cum nuda et erant iudicati per sententiam ad perdendum bona.” Henri Gilles, ed., *Les coutumes de Toulouse (1286) et leur premier commentaire (1296)* (Toulouse: Imprimerie Maurice ESPIC, 1969), 256–57.

² AMT-AA60, AA61, AA62. It is also the subject of a brief chapter in Roger Merle, *Les grandes affaires criminelles de Toulouse* (Toulouse: Édouard Privat, 1978), 29–32.

under the staircase of her house. For these crimes, he condemned her to run the city streets of Toulouse (an amended version of “*currant nudi*”), to forfeit all of her goods to the court, and to be decapitated at the “chopping block” (“*au tal-hador*”) before the city’s Royal Treasury. Afterwards, the seneschal ordered her body to be hanged at the city’s gallows, while her head was to be taken to Portet and displayed on a pike. “And thus she shall perish.”³ On the determined day, however, the execution did not go off smoothly. Clare ran the town, authorities presumably confiscated her possessions, but after the seneschal’s officers loaded her into the executioner’s cart (Fig. 1) and started to wheel her to the site of her beheading, a group of municipal administrators (known as capitols) and their sergeants burst through the crowd of spectators and physically stopped the vessel. This was not an act of chivalry or benevolence; instead, the civic officials insisted that *they* (and not the seneschal) should have the right to execute her. After hours of intense public confrontation between the royal and local officials (with Clare still bound in the cart), what resulted was a four year jurisdictional battle over who had the right to decapitate this woman.

At its core, the archival records of this case raise a lot of fundamental questions about the particularity of this specific crime and execution. Chronologically, France was engaged in the Hundred Years’ War, with English forces steadily occupying the northern territory after Henry V’s victory at Agincourt in 1415. A bit later, the Dauphin Charles granted a teenage girl an opportunity to rally French resistance from the south, but in 1431, the English captured the same Joan of Arc, condemned and burned her at the stake for heresy and witchcraft in the northern city of Rouen. In light of these broader political concerns, how can we contextualize the contentious efforts of these secular administrations to decapitate publicly Clare de Portet in the south? In addition, the documents do not indicate what happened to Clare’s lover, the sailor who presumably participated in the murder, and who certainly lived with her while the corpse of the husband rotted nearby. In terms of violent acts (and especially in criminal investigations of murder), the male offender typically carried the brunt of the legal blame, as judges perceived the female as an easily manipulated, and physically limited, participant in the crime. So why was Clare the lone focus of this jurisdictional dispute? And perhaps even more remarkable about this situation is the execution itself, because I have struggled to find additional examples of authorities beheading a female criminal throughout the Middle Ages. So far, I have only come across Trevor Dean’s mention of a case from Bologna in 1344, when the city’s *podestà* convicted and beheaded a woman for crushing her newborn baby’s throat

3 “Qui ainsi fera ainsi périra.” AMT-AA6, 60.

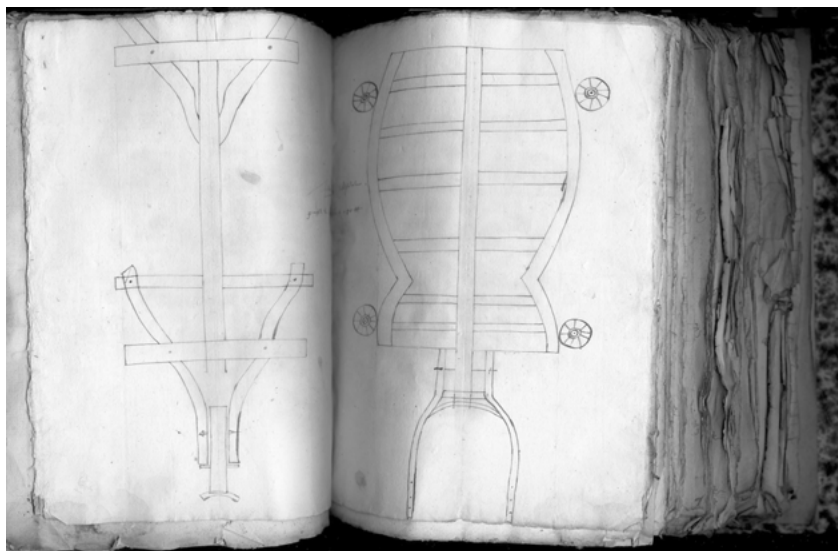


Fig. 1: This seventeenth-century municipal account log from Toulouse includes a sketch that represents the construction blueprints for a chariot used to transported criminals from the city jail to the site of their execution. We may surmise that officials used a similar vehicle for Clare de Portet. Ville de Toulouse, Archives municipales, AMT-CC2625 (1623–1624).

with her bare hands, but that is the extent of the details.⁴ In most of the literature and in the archival cases I have studied, authorities subjected women only to specific punishments, and decapitation simply was not one of them. Even if the story of Clare de Portet endures in the archives today because it is, indeed, exceptional to all we know about gender and medieval crime and punishment, it still deserves close consideration in order to theorize that by the fifteenth century, in some circumstances, authorities saw just an offender—not a woman—but just a criminal who needed to die in a spectacular fashion.

Because of the nature of the archival sources, I recognize that there are limits to which I may draw definitive conclusions about the multifaceted meanings surrounding the execution of women at the end of the Middle Ages. For example, many of the criminal cases do not even include indications of guilt or innocence, let alone official sentences. But I also believe firmly in the validity of this piece of micro-history. If anything, it allows us to think about the fifteenth century as an

⁴ Trevor Dean, *Crime in Medieval Europe 1200–1550* (New York: Longman Publications, 2001), 79.

era of transition in the French judicial process. Perhaps the tumultuous opening of the century forced secular authorities to ignore presumptions of the “typical” female criminal in order to demonstrate their power and relevance by controlling the punitive performance that unfolded in the civic space. Maybe the lack of a public outcry at the beheading of Clare de Portet suggests that the culture of death and dying was becoming less sensitive, and more secularized, toward a woman convicted of adultery and murder.

To examine these concepts, first, this paper will contextualize the case into the current historiography of gender and criminality in order to assess how historians have grappled with the archival evidence of female perpetrators and their deadly acts. This section includes what types of crimes women committed, and some examples of wives involved in the murder of their husbands. The second portion assesses how and why authorities treated these felonious females in a wide range of offenses, and explores the significance of decapitation in fostering a distinctive type of chastisement in medieval civilization. Very recently, severed heads have become an interest for literary scholars, pursuing meanings in hagiography and epics, and some of the cultural ramifications of these studies shed light on beheading as capital punishment. The final section delves into the details from the extant records of the legal dispute involving Clare de Portet, to try to seek some explanation as to her fate. It should be stressed here that in the proceedings no one questioned her guilt in the murder of her husband. Authorities only debated who had the lawful jurisdiction to cut off her head.

The relationship between women, gender, and deviance at the end of the Middle Ages is a complex one. For some scholars, the answers lie in the quantitative data, which suggest that women were statistically less involved in crime than men. For example, James Given has found that in England during the mid-thirteenth century, less than ten percent of accused killers were women, and in the first half of the fourteenth century, women were accused of only ten percent of reported felonies.⁵ In France, at the end of the fourteenth century, of the 127 people who appeared in the *Registre criminel du Châtelet* (1389–1392), nineteen were women accused of theft.⁶ Guy Geltner’s study of Italian cities reveals that women were represented in the records of offenses punishable by imprisonment, but again, they were less involved than their male counterparts.

⁵ James B. Given, *Society and Homicide in Thirteenth-Century England* (Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 1977), 134–49.

⁶ M. Henri Duplès-Agier, ed. *Registre criminel du Châtelet de Paris du 6 Septembre 1389 au 18 Mai 1392*, 2 vols. (Paris: Imprimer par C. Lahure, 1861–1864).

In Venice, seventeen percent of theft persecutions were committed by women during the years 1270 to 1347, and only fourteen percent between 1348 and 1403.⁷ Barbara Hanawalt speculates that the low number of female representatives in criminal records could come from the bias of male judges and juries who were hesitant to arrest or punish the “weaker sex.”⁸ But beyond numeric consideration, another matter for historians is to determine whether or not women’s involvement in crime significantly differed from men.⁹ As a result, some works conceive of female crime in terms of sexual offenses such as prostitution, concubinage, or adultery. In fact, the first legal precedent set forth by the capitols of Toulouse in 1176 concerned the adulterous Babilonia, accused of running away with a soldier, and as a consequence, was forced to surrender all of her goods and dowry as compensation to her husband.¹⁰ By the end of the Middle Ages, though, we know that women did participate in theft, burglary, or the reception of stolen goods as well as brutal crimes such as murder, but the problem remains in trying to create a neat binary construct of either masculine or feminine criminal behavior.

For offenses like theft, regional variations abound, although typically, female offenders came from the lower ranks of society and committed petty acts out of desperation or opportunity. In England, for example, women were more likely to steal food and clothing than their male counterparts.¹¹ In Paris, the *Registre criminel du Châtelet* contains cases of prostitutes such as Marion du Pont and Marion de la Court who stole money and goods from customers. Under torture, Marion du Pont confessed to robbing from a series of different clients’ households and hotel establishments, and for these crimes she was sentenced to death.¹² The story of Marion de la Court was more complicated, in that she claimed that she was stealing at the behest of her pimp, who allegedly beat her if she did not present him with pilfered goods.¹³ The court took little sympathy of her plight, and also subjected her to torture to hear her confession of over

7 Guy Geltner, “A Cell of their Own: The Incarceration of Women in Late Medieval Italy,” *Signs* 39.1 (2013): 27–51; here 30.

8 Barbara Hanawalt, “The Female Felon in Fourteenth-Century England,” *Viator* 5 (1974): 253–68; here 256.

9 For a discussion of gender constructs of criminal violence in the early Middle Ages, see Ross Balzaretto, “These are Things that Men Do, Not Women’: The Social Regulation of Female Violence in Langobard Italy,” *Violence and Society in Early Medieval West*, ed. Guy Halsall (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 1998), 175–92.

10 AMT-AA1:33, March, 1176.

11 Hanawalt, “Female Felon” (see note 8). 262.

12 *Registre criminel*, vol. II, 386 (see note 6).

13 *Registre criminel* (see note 6), vol. II, 435.

thirty thefts, for which she was ultimately buried alive.¹⁴ Similarly, in 1375, the court of Bologna found a prostitute named Lisia guilty of stealing both money and clothes from taverns and clients over the span of two years.¹⁵

Besides overt petty theft, women are also found in the criminal records engaging in the transmission of stolen goods, and in at least one case, a wife named Ameline de Warlus made a pretty good career of it while running a second-hand clothes shop in Paris. According to witness testimony (and after two sessions of torture), officials at the Châtelet determined that Ameline had an elaborate network of thieves who would discreetly notify her when they had clothes for her to purchase, which she could then sell for a profit.¹⁶ For Bronislaw Geremek, this case in particular illuminates a connection between the marginalized world of theft and the world of trade, with women very frequently serving as the conduit.¹⁷ For her role in the crime, Ameline de Warlus was sentenced to the pillory and banishment, but for another woman named Perrette Mauger, her facilitation of the resale of stolen goods for a band of thieves resulted in the death penalty in 1460.¹⁸

In terms of violent crimes, it is a more difficult task of reconciling generalizations with the specifics found in extant court documents, especially from Toulouse. Broadly speaking, historians have argued that while women did participate in assaults and attacks, inherently the resulting wounds were not as severe. Whereas men had access to weapons and brute strength, women were left with their fists and physical limitations. As a result, judges tended to be more lenient in their consideration of female perpetrators.¹⁹ In England, when husband and wife acted together in committing a crime, jurors would convict the husband and acquit the wife, on the grounds that she “could not contradict her husband’s wishes.”²⁰

In my research in the archives of Toulouse, I have come to depend heavily on a criminal register (dated from April to October of 1332), which contains fifty-two cases that offer remarkable insight into the legal process of Toulouse, and the

14 *Registre criminel* (see note 6), vol. II, 437.

15 Dean, *Crime in Medieval Europe* (see note 7), 76.

16 *Registre criminel* (see note 6), vol. I, 157–64.

17 Bronislaw Geremek, *The Margins of Society in Late Medieval Paris*, trans. Jean Birrell. Past and Present Publications (1976; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 263–69.

18 Geremek, *Margins of Society* (see note 17), 269.

19 Dean, *Crime in Medieval Europe* (see note 7), 77.

20 Henry Summerson, “Maitland and the Criminal Law in the Age of Bracton,” *The History of English Law: Centenary Essays on “Pollock and Maitland,”* ed. John Hudson. Proceedings of the British Academy, 89 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 115–43; here 117.

daily lives, tensions, and concerns of the people who interacted with each other in the streets of the city. The cases are certainly not representative of all of the criminal activity in Toulouse. If a member of the church committed an infraction, for example, he would be tried in an ecclesiastical court, and many lesser offences were never recorded or even made it to trial. Instead, the city capitols primarily heard cases that resonated with the populace and invited public performances at trial and punishments. For this article, the register behooves our discussion because it includes extensive details of how a municipal court treated women accused of criminal violence.

Of the fifty-two surviving cases, three married women were listed as primary defendants: Ricarda, was married to Arnaldus de Bolbenas, a merchant of Carriera Nova in Saint Cyprian.²¹ Bernarda, was the wife of Arnaldus Durandi, a tavern keeper (*tabernarius*) of barrio Alte Rippe.²² Gualharda, wife of Arnaldus Aynerii de Petra Lada, was identified and charged as a conspirator with a male neighbor for orchestrating an assault and publicly humiliating a woman with a bad reputation.²³ All three women committed vicious crimes against individuals who were not in their immediate families. This suggests that wives were not relegated to the private spheres of the homes, tucked away from the social and economic activity of the city. Instead, they actively engaged in the public realm as they feuded with neighbors, and stood trial for their misdeeds in the capitols' courtroom.

In the case of Ricarda, her assault stemmed from a feud with her neighbor woman named Vitalia. In most of the cases, very little context to the attack is preserved in the court records or witness testimony. So scholars can only speculate that these conflicts could erupt for a variety of reasons, including malicious gossip or professional competition. Many times spouses became common allies in violent attacks, especially in instances against a third party who had insulted the honor and status of the couple.²⁴ For example, on September 3, 1261, Petrus de Monthel, a miller, brought charges in front of the capitols against Raymundus Salevat, another miller, and his wife Geralda, seeking financial compensation of 200 *solidos tolosanos* for a physical attack he suffered.²⁵ Petrus argued that as he walked down a street, he passed in front of the couple's house, where the two sat with some other people who looked to Petrus like “criminals.” Suddenly, the

²¹ AMT-FF57, 129.

²² AMT-FF57, 151.

²³ AMT-FF57, 245.

²⁴ Nicole Gonthier, *Délinquance, justice et société en Lyonnais (fin XIIIème siècle-début XVIème siècle* (Paris: Editions Argument, 1993), 130.

²⁵ AMT, layettes series II, 60/1.

husband and wife charged him, and began hitting and kicking him with their fists and feet. After this assault had gone on for awhile, they dragged him by his clothing and hair into their house where they continued to strike him in the face, and to trample him under foot, until a neighbor who heard the screams came to his aid. Because the two men worked in the same profession, it is likely that a business rivalry prompted the assault. But Ricarda had an issue with Vitalia that she wanted to resolve by taking matters into her own hands. She publicly threatened her next door neighbor, until one day she eventually gained entrance to her house, and managed to strike her with a large rock (*magnum lapidem*). According to the deposition, with one blow, Vitalia collapsed to the ground and had to be confined to bed for a long time, believed by her husband to be in “mortal danger.”²⁶

There is a certain amount of premeditation to this case, in that she did not frantically grab a rock in a scuffle outside, but instead it was hidden until the moment of attack. And the severity of the wounds is also striking, in that the notary recorded that Vitalia was in physical peril. Ricarda’s attorney postponed the case, and alas, the register contains no testimony or verdict, but when feuds like this dissolved into violence, the capitols’ and their court became a broader venue for these interpersonal disputes, beyond the immediate vicinity of the city streets. The litigants brought cases to trial to seek some public retribution and acknowledgement of the tensions that could sprout during the daily frustrations of urban living.

The next case of the criminal register involving a woman named Bernarda Durandi is particularly illustrative of the escalation of conflict between Toulousains (regardless of sex) in a neighborhood by the Garonne River. One day, as tavern owner Guillelmus Amusse sold wine and other goods to his many clients, Bernarda, the wife of a fellow tavern owner from the same neighborhood, entered his business. Bernarda wanted to return a dish (*scutella*) she had purchased from Guillelmus’ wife, but the proprietor refused to issue a refund. As the transaction occurred in front of several witnesses, apparently Bernarda perceived this as an insult, and she became furious and started screaming at the wife that “bad things would come to her body.”²⁷ Bernarda stormed out of the tavern, only to return a short while later with a dagger concealed beneath her clothes. After confronting Guillelmus, she withdrew the dagger and stabbed him in the chest until he fell back to the floor. This, however, did not satisfy

²⁶ AMT-FF 57, 129.

²⁷ AMT-FF57, 151: “Ex hus mota ira incepit rixari ... et dicendo pro malium infortunium eveniret eis.”

the *ira* of Bernarda. According to the records, the next day she recruited several “corrupt” men to assist her plan. She instructed the men to go to Guillelmus’s house in the middle of the night and bang on the door, shouting that they wanted to buy some wine. When Guillelmus opened the door to greet his customers, the armed men attacked him, wounding him in the head. Bernarda was an angry woman, but not irrational. She took the time to secure male accomplices to complete her vengeance, and fulfill her desire to see Guillelmus suffer. She realized that Guillelmus would not allow her back into his tavern, and so she had to find a devious way to gain access to him at his most vulnerable. Perhaps Bernarda believed that Guillelmus and his wife humiliated her by dismissing her business transaction. She converted her anger into revenge, striving to reestablish her pride by fooling and injuring her foil.

In the third case, a female defendant paired up with a neighbor in order to police the morality of a small district of the suburb of Saint Cyprian on the left bank of the Garonne River in Toulouse. A merchant named Guillelmus Calveti and a woman named Gualharda, the wife of Arnaldus Aynorii, conspired against their neighbor Alamanda, wife of Petrus Bergonhonis.²⁸ What we know of the case is that Alamanda complained to the capitols in court that the two defendants publicly defamed her character, and threatened her safety on numerous occasions. She said that they told their neighbors that they would not break bread with her, and would in fact “break bread in her bed,” and leave a mark on her face so she would “always be recognized,” and “deformed in her face.”²⁹ These disparaging remarks, taken as a whole, seemed to accuse Alamanda of illicit sexual conduct, and to allude to outright prostitution. Prostitutes were not allowed to socialize or to be welcomed into respectable homes, and the threat of “breaking bread” in her bed could serve as a symbolic accusation that she had hosted many men in that location. And aspiring to scar her face not only would create social isolation, but some cultures believed that a woman who had a permanent mark on her face did not have sexual integrity.³⁰

28 AMT-FF57, 245.

29 AMT-FF57, 245: “panem suum comedent in lecto” ... “taliter esset signata in eius facie pro semper cognosceretur et esset deformatata dicte eius faciey.”

30 From a literary perspective, the best example of this phenomenon is perhaps Marie de France’s “Bisclavret,” in which a werewolf bites off the nose of his disloyal wife, and her children are born with the same inflection. *The Lais of Marie de France*, trans. Glyn S. Burgess and Keith Busby (New York: Penguin Books, 1999), 68–72. I thank Albrecht Classen for pointing this out to me, as well as other significant literary analogies below.

Valentin Groebner argues more specifically that the severing of a nose signified an assault against the sexual honor of an individual, both in criminal punishments sanctioned by the municipal governments, and through duels fought between rivals. A husband in late medieval Germany, for example, could punish his wife for infidelity by cutting off her nose.³¹ But the accused defendants Guillelmus Calveti and Gualharda were not content to slander Alamanda's reputation and social standing in their neighborhood. They also coordinated a ritual humiliation that drove her from their neighborhood. The couple forced Alamanda to cross over a bridge from the suburb and into the city of Toulouse, and "denounced" her way of life as they made her walk like a "poor woman." The procession ended in a vineyard outside of the gate of the Château Narbonnais.³² The two conspirators then directed some malefactors to the location where they had left Alamanda. The men beat her so badly that she was later discovered half-dead. When the capitols summoned Guillelmus Calveti and Gualharda to stand trial for these accusations, both proclaimed their innocence of any misdeed, and brought in clergyman Lord Geraldus Capellanus from their neighborhood church to discredit Alamanda's reputation.³³ The sources do not reveal the outcome of this case, but it seems as though the men and women of this neighborhood tried to enforce their idea of civic order and dignity by targeting and marginalizing this third party.

Within the span of seven months in 1332, the capitols of Toulouse heard the charges against these women for these dramatic and public affronts against the community. When compared to the cases that involved male defendants from the same register, there is little to no difference in the formulaic layout of the notary's work or in the way the capitols treated the offenders. So this seems to contradict the perceived notion that constructs of medieval gender affected the way officials viewed women. These women were not portrayed as weak or feeble, or as passive accomplices or instigators. Already in 1332, there was no sense that the female constitution deserved anything less than serious repercussions. In fact, one of the few outcomes from a criminal allegation that survives in the archives of Toulouse is a jurisdictional dispute from later in the same year, where the capitols found a mother, Berengaria Vitalis, guilty of selling her daughter's virginity to a wealthy young man in the neighborhood.

31 Valetine Groebner, *Defaced: The Visual Culture of Violence in the Late Middle Ages*, trans. Pamela Selwyn (New York: Zone Books, 2004), 67–86.

32 AMT-FF57, 245.

33 AMT-FF57, 246.

The capitols sentenced her to undergo a ritual punishment called a *rege ribaldum*, without the vicar’s knowledge or consent.³⁴ She was to run the streets of the city, and then be exiled, but the capitols included an extra touch. She would also wear a crown of straw (*garlanda de palea*) upon her head. The record of this case is graphic in describing a customary act that went awry, because by the time the procession come to its end, the participants had reached a fevered, almost riotous state of emotion. Officers had roused the spectators by inviting their cries of disdain and judgment against this mother, to the point that a spectator spontaneously burst from the crowd and set the crown of straw on fire.³⁵ Clearly, the fine line between ritual justice and mob violence had been blurred and the looming threat of death for this woman became a close reality. The capitols intended this crown of straw to humiliate Berengaria as she ran through the town, so that all could see she had committed a sexual crime. The crowd’s fervor drove that punishment one step further by setting the crown of straw on fire, leaving permanent scars to her face and ruining her hair; she carried a sign of her misdeed for the rest of her life.

If we step back from Toulouse, we need, here, to consider other examples of wives who killed their husbands at the end of the Middle Ages. Claude Gauvard insists that this was a very rare phenomenon that was generally the product of many long years of spousal abuse. She offers as example a case from 1415, where Marie la Mugière, from Sens, testified in court that she had endured eighteen years of suffering at the hands of her blind husband. The final straw came one evening after a long day at a wine harvest, when she came home to find that her husband had ruined a separate stash of grapes. When she confronted him, a fight ensued where he physically threw her out of the house. She returned with force, and in the process of the struggle she administered a lethal blow. The court exonerated her for this fatality, because they deemed that she had endured years with this abusive and burdensome man, and “in other cases, she was always a woman of a good life.”³⁶ Hanawalt provides another self-defense case that is less transparent, as an English woman claimed that one night her husband was struck by a fit of insanity and out of desperation she slit his throat

34 The inquest into the execution of Berengaria Vitalis and convicted thief, Guillelmus de Portello, are recorded in register AMT-FF59. Although I have searched extensively for an accurate translation of *rege ribaldum*, none has proven satisfactory. Dr. François Bordes, director of the Municipal Archives of Toulouse, suggested that it was an expression akin to “charivari,” or a regional expression for any ritual punishment.

35 AMT-FF59, fol. 20r.

36 Claude Gauvard, “*De Grace Especial*”: *Crime, état et société en France à la fin du Moyen Âge*. Histoire ancienne et médiéval, 24 (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1991), vol. I, 314.

and smashed his skull with a bill hook. Rather than put her fate in the hands of the court, she fled to a church to secure asylum.³⁷

There are, however, cases of wives plotting with lovers to murder their husbands, but in general scholars argue that the woman was seemingly impotent in the crime, in that she schemed, while the man carried it out.³⁸ A well-documented case from the Île de France in 1369 illuminates the plotting involved at the high ranks of society.³⁹ The victim of the scheme was a wealthy nobleman named Even Dol who was a councilor to the king and received the privileges and protection of that title. Apparently, he also loaned money to those who needed it, but he was ruthless and heartless in getting back his investment. His wife was Ameline, the daughter of the war treasurer of King Charles V. The well-connected couple came to know Roland de Santeuil, a clerk and sellsword, or mercenary, who needed a loan from Evan to pay a ransom in Spain. Heavily in debt, then, Roland began to visit the Dol house, under the pretense that he was courting their daughter Michelete.

In the process, Roland learned the rhythms of the household, started an amorous relationship with wife Ameline, and the two concocted a plan to get rid of the patriarch, Even Dol. With one blow, Roland would be rid of his financial obligation, and Ameline would be out of an unhappy marriage. The murder came in the form of an ambush: an assailant struck and killed Even Dol with a sword as he was traveling on his way to Paris. Shortly thereafter, royal authorities arrested the wife and lover and pursued the case aggressively because of the *sauvegard* afforded to Even Dol due to his rank and title. Although the records indicate that the murderous pair confessed to the crime under torture, there is not a clear indication of the punishment applied to the two. It does suggest that in this scenario, the wife was in no position to kill her husband with a weapon or organize a forest attack where her husband was most vulnerable, but that the court most likely saw her as an accomplice who hatched the idea, knew the risk involved, but did not participate in the fatal blow.

Even at the lowest of demographic levels women could manipulate a lover to do away with a husband that stood in the way of their relationship. The register from the Châtelet de Paris has a case from 1391, involving Belon, the wife of Drion Anceau, which (considering the amount of scholarship this source has in-

³⁷ Hanawalt, "Female Felon" (see note 8), 260.

³⁸ Again, Marie de France provides an example of this in the story of "Equitan," where a seneschal's wife plots (unsuccessfully) with her lover, the king, to get rid of her husband by making him jump, unaware of the true heat, into boiling water. *The Lais*, 56–60 (see note 30).

³⁹ Annik Porteau-Bitker, "Un crime passionnel au milieu du XIV^e siècle," *Revue historique de droit français et étranger* 59 (1981): 635–51.

spired) I was surprised to come across. A lesser French court notified Parisian officials that before it executed a criminal named Thevenin Tout Seul for other crimes, he had confessed that earlier that year, with the consent of Belon, he had murdered her husband by strangling him with his bare hands, and they collectively disposed of the body by tossing it in a river nearby. This second authority wanted the Parisian officials to find and punish her.

When confronted, not surprisingly, Belon professed her innocence in the matter, and testified that Thevenin Tout Seul acted alone in this crime. In her initial deposition, she recounted that while she and her husband had lived in a hotel, Thevenin Tout Seul had been another guest who had propositioned her for sex on multiple occasions. Although she had resisted, one night before the feast of Toussaint (the first of November), he had approached her and had tried to seduce her one last time. Belon recalled that he had professed his love, and had intimated that if her husband was dead, they could get married. All she had to do, he had continued, was to leave the door to their room unlocked.⁴⁰ Not thinking much of it, one night, before she had joined her husband in bed, she had left the hinge unfastened. She claimed she had woken up around three o'clock in the morning to find Thevenin kneeling by her bed, and he had whispered, "be quiet, it's me. I did it." Then, she rolled over to find that he had strangled her husband to death with his bare hands. Desperate and afraid, she helped him to dispose of the body, and they kept their distance for a few days, so as not to arouse suspicion among the other residents of the hotel.

Eventually they had fled to join a band of travelling minstrels and *guiterne* players. The couple had separated when Thevenin left for Paris to find employment. In her testimony, she insisted that she had never slept with Thevenin until after the murder, and she claimed to have been a victim of this persistent man's manipulations to get rid of her husband. This defense did not impress the court, which found her guilty and sentenced her to be burned at the stake. In her final moments of life, she finally confessed that her husband had been a bad provider, and out of desperation she would have sex with Thevenin in return for money and goods. As this adulterous relationship ran its course, the couple turned to murder and the anonymity of a transient life to try and find happiness together. In the end, it cost them their lives, and the records indicate that Belon was so poor she had no possession for the courts to confiscate after her death.

Without a male accomplice, the other way in which a woman could be implicated in the harm of a husband was through the assistance of the diabolical, which resulted in a trial of witchcraft. Although the *Registre criminel* contains a

⁴⁰ *Registre criminel* (see note 6), vol. II, 55–61.

couple of trials for lower class women convicted and burned at the stake for love magic,⁴¹ fourteenth-century Ireland actually provides the first witchcraft trial in Europe that accused a woman of gaining sinister power after having had sexual intercourse with a demon. Alice Kyteler of Kilkenny was a woman who had out-lived several husbands, and in the process had inherited a good amount of money. Once her stepchildren started to resent her prosperity, rumors swirled that she had manipulated her many spouses through the diabolical, first luring them in with love magic, and then killing them with the aid of the devil.⁴² Officials built a case that Alice had a demon lover, and that she participated in Sabbaths where she made sacrifices to the devil. And this was confirmed through the confession of a former servant made under torture. When her fourth husband turned ill in 1324, pressure started to mount in the community, and Alice had to flee to England for refuge. Although Alice does not perfectly fit the profile of the defendants targeted during the peak of the witch craze in the early modern period, her story still suggests a certain social incredulity that a woman could engage in these deadly misdeeds on her own, without the help of some other force.⁴³

Unfortunately, Toulouse's archival records of the case of Clare de Portet do not reveal exactly how she killed her husband, but they do indicate that the murder took place either at the end of 1427 or early 1428, and her condemnation was pronounced at the end of May, 1428. Given the speed of the medieval justice system, we can consider that for a good four or five months she hid her husband's rotting corpse under the stairs of her house, while Clare and her boyfriend lived as a couple, systematically selling off her late husband's possessions. Although a violent demise at the hand of her lover is always a possibility, Clare might have had the opportunity to poison or stab her husband herself. Whatever the cause of death, the murderers could have conceived of a method that would have left the corpse in a condition tolerable enough that they could live with it for several months. Anything too gruesome perhaps would have resulted in a more concerted effort to dispose of the body. But then again, the audacity of the couple to keep the dead husband under the stairs might explain why the seneschal issued

⁴¹ For example, *Registre criminel* (see note 6), vol. I, 327–61, and vol. II, 280–343.

⁴² L. S. Davidson and John O. Ward, ed., *The Sorcery Trial of Alice Kyteler: A Contemporary Account (1324) Together with Related Documents in English Translation, with Introduction and Notes* (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1993).

⁴³ Michael D. Bailey, *Magic and Superstition in Europe: A Concise History from Antiquity to the Present*. Critical Issues in History (Lanham, Boulder, and New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 2007), 123.

such an extensive and public punishment to be played out in the streets of Toulouse.

By the end of the Middle Ages, judicial administrations had standardized the rituals of public executions to the extent that everything—from the use of city space to the use of dress—reflected the status of the offender and the severity of the crime. Before execution, a common criminal was stripped to the waist, while a nobleman wore his livery of rank and office; a common criminal was hanged, while a person of rank was beheaded with a sword. Even transportation to the site of execution carried meaning, as a common criminal was strapped to a hurdle (or a wooden board) and dragged by horses to the location of his execution, while a noble was transported in a cart. Inherently, in this decision, authorities intended to signify their control over the orchestrated execution in that they moved the culprit, he did not move himself.⁴⁴ In the hands of secular officials, the dying and death of a criminal created a deliberate showcase for their power and of the way in which they could restore order to the community.

But due to the nature of the archival sources, it is difficult to assess how often judicial authorities publicly punished criminals. Most of the statistical evidence from medieval France indicates that the number of people actually executed was relatively low in relationship to the number of people charged with crimes. Between 1387 and 1400, for example, the Parisian Parlement heard more than two hundred cases, of which only four ended in capital punishment.⁴⁵ In Arras, the municipal government infrequently ordered corporal punishment, mutilation and capital executions, with the city averaging only one death sentence a year in the fifteenth century.⁴⁶

Jacques Chiffolleau found that the administration of fifteenth-century Avignon preferred to punish criminals with a prescribed set of financial fines, although papal justice had an arsenal of spectacular chastisements at its disposal.⁴⁷ Outside of France this seems to be the case as well. David Nicholas has shown that execution for crime did not occur very often in fourteenth-century Ghent. He argues that the bailiff of the city commissioned the death sentence

⁴⁴ Esther Cohen, *The Crossroads of Justice: Law and Culture in Late Medieval France*. Brill's Studies in Intellectual History, 36 (Leiden, New York, and Cologne: Brill, 1992), 187.

⁴⁵ Gauvard, *De grace especial* (see note 36), 897.

⁴⁶ Robert Muchembled, *Le temps des supplices: De l'obéissance sous les rois absolus, XVe–XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1992), 57.

⁴⁷ Jacques Chiffolleau, *Les Justices du pape: délinquance et criminalité dans la région d'Avignon au XIVe siècle*. Histoire ancienne et médiévale, 14 (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1984), 211–42.

in less than ten percent of cases each year, and in fact preferred banishment to the death sentence.⁴⁸

Historians of Toulouse do not have the luxury of extensive data concerning the exact number of executions from the fourteenth century. One of the vicars, Eustachius Fabri, kept an expense report for the year 1321 to 1322 that provides some clue as to how often the Toulousains witnessed criminals punished. In that year, the municipal trumpeter, Guillelmus Johannis, played his trumpet and announced the crime of one hundred and thirty-nine individuals who were either forced to run the streets of the city as a means of public humiliation or to stand shackled in the window of the town hall. Of those criminals, Fabri noted, forty-one were then sentenced to death.⁴⁹

According to this figure, the local administration executed nearly thirty percent of the people convicted of a serious crime. The numbers of criminals put to death and of cases with prisoners who had to run the town or stood exposed and bound are staggering for a one year period. Unfortunately, there is no other archival evidence to substantiate this entry in the vicar's expense report or to provide any explanation as to why this number would be so high, and when compared to the statistics of other similar cities in the era it is almost unfathomable. But the importance of executions and punishments in the urban milieu resides not in the frequency, but in the public, ritual meaning behind the events.

Esther Cohen believes that medieval authorities and chroniclers created a "visual trick" through these spectacular executions. Even though the death sentences may not have occurred regularly, she argues, the painstaking processions to the gallows and bloodshed of the prisoner left a lasting impression upon spectators, leading them to recall the particularity and individuality of each execution.⁵⁰ With a single decapitation or mutilation, a municipal government could

48 David Nicholas, "Crime and Punishment in Fourteenth-Century Ghent," *Revue Belge de philologie et d'histoire* XLVIII (1970): 289–334, 1141–76; here 328–29.

49 François Maillard, ed., *Comptes royaux (1314–1328)*. Recueil des Historiens de la France, Documents Financiers, 14 (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1961), no. 1071, 70: "Guillelmo Johannis, tubicinatori, pro 139 personis per ipsum tubicinatis dum currebat per villam Tholose, vel stabant in fenestra domus communis Tholose, pro excessibus per eos commissis, de quibus 41 persone receperunt mortem, 3 d. tol. pro quilibet: 69 s. 6 d. t."

50 Esther Cohen, "'To Die a Criminal for Public Good: The Execution Ritual in Late Medieval Paris," *Law, Customs, and the Social Fabric in Medieval Europe: Essays in Honor of Bryce Lyon*, ed. Bernard Bacharach. Studies in Medieval Culture (Kalamazoo, MI: Western Michigan University Press, 1990), 280–304; here 300. Robert Mills continues this discussion in *Suspended Animation: Pain, Pleasure and Punishment in Medieval Culture* (London: Reaktion Books, 2005), 16–17.

make a statement both about its power, and intolerance for particular crimes that could endure for decades. Historians have debated, however, exactly how to unpack the notion of public punishment as ritual drama. Spierenburg argues that executions were a combination of religious and secular elements, which were intended to provide the criminal numerous opportunities to confess, to repent, and to be reconciled with God before death.⁵¹ A passive crowd stood by as witness to the solemn procession, as priests and clergy accompanied the convict to the scaffold. But Gauvard insists that medieval spectators were actively engaged in the whole process (which she believes was lacking in any spiritual tone), and the viewers were prepared to intervene in certain circumstances. If an executioner failed to offer a clean blow with his axe, or a rope broke before a criminal was successfully hanged, the audience could take it as a sign of God's mercy. In both interpretations, administrations placed careful consideration in the preparation of any execution or punishment, in order to appease the public and to advance their judicial or social agenda.

That being said, authorities chose their criminals with discretion. For example, in Paris, outsiders and transients suffered the majority of the executions involving torture, amputations, or bodily remains left on the display of pikes or gibbets.⁵² The most common profile of the executed criminal was a young lower class male, unsettled and unmarried.⁵³ The Parisian authorities assigned lesser monetary sentences to local inhabitants who had financial and social ties to the community, unless the crime was treason against the king or especially heinous in its nature.⁵⁴ These studies imply that if royal or municipal governments chose to demonstrate their authority through the spectacles of punishment, someone who resided on the fringes of the general public became the most viable candidate, perhaps because there would be no popular protest against the execution. But it appears that in Toulouse, the capitols chose to punish publicly prisoners who had committed crimes which resonated with the public in some way. The men and women executed or ritually chastised had distur-

51 Peter Spierenburg, *The Spectacle of Suffering: Executions and the Evolution of Repression, from a Preindustrial Metropolis to the European Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 46–52, 61–63.

52 Rodrigue Lavoie, "Les statistiques criminelles et le visage du justicier: justice royale et justice seigneuriale en Provence au Moyen Âge," *Provence historique* 115 (1979): 3–20; here 15, 18.

53 The administration of early modern Amsterdam also favored this demographic of convicted criminals. Spierenburg, *The Spectacle of Suffering* (see note 51), 153–65.

54 Rodrigue Lavoie, "Justice, criminalité et peine de mort en France au moyen âge: essai de typologie et de régionalisation," *Le Sentiment de la mort au moyen âge: Études présentées au Cinquième colloque de l'institut d'études médiévales de l'Université de Montréal*, ed. Claude Sutto (Montreal: L'Aurore, 1979), 31–55; here 54.

bed the balance of order within Toulouse, and only through their punishment could it be restored.

The most dramatic and ritualistic punishment the municipal authority employed was sentencing criminals and moral offenders to run the town, in variations of the *currant nudi* mentioned at the beginning of this article. The capitols created a mobile performance of chastisement where a large amount of space and a variety of people witnessed the municipal authorities' ability to reestablish order and justice to the city. Officers dragged the culpable parties to a designated site in the city, where the civic trumpeter, once again, announced the crimes and sounded his horn, before leading the procession of humiliation throughout the most populous and frequented streets during broad daylight. Variations abounded for the treatment of the defendants and for what crimes warranted this punishment. At times, the criminals had to wear objects which revealed their offenses. In Albi, the city's *prud'hommes* sentenced a pickpocket to run the town, naked to his waist, with the objects he had stolen tied around his neck.⁵⁵ On other occasions, executioners whipped the prisoner as he ran the town, inviting the public to join in the taunts and throw objects as well.⁵⁶

Customary law dictated that adulterers run nude, and in one illustration from a thirteenth-century Toulouse manuscript, the female defendant leads her lover by a rope tied around his penis.⁵⁷ Leah Lydia Otis found several examples of prostitutes and procurers in Languedoc sentenced to this punishment in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.⁵⁸ For thieves, adulterers, and prostitutes, the capitols ordered that they forfeit all of their goods to the city after running the town. The criminals then faced perpetual exile from the city. But for particularly heinous crimes, running was replaced with dragging, and the procession ended in death. In 1290, Albi's consuls sentenced B. Salomonis of Noailles who "carnally knew a certain cow," to be tied to the tail of a horse, dragged through-

⁵⁵ AMA-FF 7, fol. 1v.

⁵⁶ CR (see note 49), no. 3525, 210.

⁵⁷ Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS lat. 9187, fol. 30v. Jean-Marie Carbasse, "Currant nudi : Le répression de l'adultère dans le Midi médiéval, XIIe–VXe siècles," *Droit, Histoire et Sexualité*, ed. Jacques Poumarede and Jean-Pierre Royer (Lille: Achèvé d'imprimer, 1987), 83–102. Henri Gilles remarks that *la course* must have been common at the end of the thirteenth century, even though it "souleva alors les protestations des consuls." This seems to be an effort of Gilles to downplay the capitols' role in any of these customary punishments. *Les coutumes de Toulouse* (see note 1), 256, 2n.

⁵⁸ Leah Lydia Otis, *Prostitution in Medieval Society: The History of an Urban Institution in Languedoc*. Women in Culture and Society (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985), 91, 95.

out the streets of the city, decapitated and then burned.⁵⁹ In other instances of bestiality, the animal was burned with the fornicator. In 1463, a man in Dijon, charged with an indecent relationship with both a cow and a mare was burned with the two animals until they were reduced to ashes.⁶⁰ In the circumstance of running the town, the sound of the trumpeter's horn signaled to the people of Toulouse that a public offender was passing through their streets. Standing in their doorways, either armed with garbage to be thrown or just passing judgment, spectators knew that the capitols had caught and reprimanded a danger to their society.

Convicted criminals followed a specific path through Toulouse, although the trumpeter certainly had the discretion to lead the procession through side streets when occasion warranted. Traditionally, the convict began the spectacle at the Arnaud Bernard Gate, then ran through the city streets, and ended the route upon a grassy section of land in front of the Château Narbonnais. Today, this course can be walked in less than twenty minutes at a leisurely pace. The duration of the event, however, was not as significant as the space covered. The path crossed before major landmarks and also cut through the major social groups of the city: the religious figures and university students who lived in the region of Saint Sernin, the municipal administrators around the town hall, the commercial section closer to the Garonne River, and finally the region surrounding the château, where the lawyers and royal officials were installed. The path joined the sites symbolic to the history of Toulouse, unifying past and present in a deliberate show of civic solidarity.

Perhaps one of the most common ways in which the capitols could establish their role in the high justice of the city was through the physical presence of the gallows and pillories. Throughout the thirteenth century, the municipal authority erected both temporary and permanent structures in various sectors of Toulouse. Gallows, wooden frames used for hangings, held a tremendous amount of symbolic authority to the people of the Middle Ages.⁶¹ In fact, the Capetian kings

⁵⁹ Archives municipales d'Albi FF 7, fol. 1v: "qui, ut dicebatur, carnaliter cum quadam vacca se immiscebat."

⁶⁰ Nicole Gonthier, *Le châtimement du crime au moyen âge, XIIe–XVIe siècles* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 1998), 163.

⁶¹ By the early modern period, gallows and the executioners held a very different place in the minds of urban authority, the city's inhabitants, and guild members. For example, an individual who came into contact willingly with the gallows or the exposed corpses was considered "polluted" and dishonored by the public. See Kathy Stuart, *Defiled Trades and Social Outcasts: Honor and Ritual Pollution in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 125–28.

regulated how many bodies of executed criminals each of the gallows could hold throughout the kingdom in order to maintain his dominance over lesser jurisdictions. Dukes' gallows could hang eight criminals at a time, and counts were limited to six. The king's gallows in Paris, however, could suspend the bodies of as many as sixty prisoners at the same time.⁶² Criminals condemned to execution at the gallows were not simply hanged until their neck broke. Instead, they suffered the slow process of strangulation, their bodies left on display after death until decay and decomposition freed the various parts of their corpse dangling from the ropes and chains.⁶³ Most authorities reserved "suspension" for men convicted of murder, treason, arson, or violent attacks.⁶⁴

Although historians have long believed that authorities never hanged female convicts because medieval attitudes toward woman found it indecent to leave her body exposed, Esther Cohen argues that fears of the supernatural were a more likely explanation.⁶⁵ Chronologically, no woman in Paris was hanged before 1449.⁶⁶ Instead, officials sentenced women convicted of capital offenses to be either buried alive with her victim, or burned at the stake to destroy her body completely. Nineteenth-century historians insisted this was an attempt to preserve female modesty by preventing the prolonged display of her body, but considering that authorities frequently whipped naked prostitutes and adulteresses in public, Cohen finds this explanation less than satisfying. Instead, she explains that there was a fear within medieval popular culture that all women possessed supernatural powers of some sort. By reason of their perceived physical and intellectual weakness, women were more likely to consort with the devil and this demonic relationship made them strong and threatening to men.⁶⁷

Female criminals were considered especially dangerous because of their convicted offenses, and so to prevent her from returning as an evil spirit, the female convict's body was either secured in the ground, or completely wiped off the face of the earth.⁶⁸ A maidservant in 1456 was sentenced to be buried

62 Henri Ramet, *Histoire de Toulouse* (1935; Marseille: Laffitte Reprints, 1977), 202. Dean, *Crime in Medieval Europe* (see note 7), 12425.

63 Roger Grand, "Justice criminelle, procédures et peines dans les villes aux XIIIe et XIVe siècles," *Bibliothèque de l'école des chartes* 102 (1941): 51–108; here 99.

64 Cohen, *The Crossroads of Justice* (see note 44), 191.

65 J. Gessler, "Mulier suspensa: à délit égal peine différente?" *Revue Belge de philologie et d'histoire* 18 (1939): 974–88. Cohen refutes Gessler's argument in "Symbols of Culpability and the Universal Language of Justice: The Ritual of Public Executions in Late Medieval Europe," *History of European Ideas*, 11 (1989): 412–13.

66 Gessler, "Mulier suspensa" (see note 65), 981.

67 Cohen, *The Crossroads of Justice* (see note 44), 95.

68 Cohen, "Symbols of Culpability" (see note 65), 413.

alive at the foot of the gallows of Paris for stealing her master's fortune, but upon appeal she received three lashes, was exposed in a pillory, and banished from the city.⁶⁹ Folke Ström found that for some women who murdered a child, authorities could first impale her with an oak stake while she either lay in a grave or on the ground, and then bury her on the spot.⁷⁰ In Aurillac, after two women strangled all of their children, they were transported to the *fourches* where executioners burned them to ashes. A young girl from Metz in 1495, who had “taken her child by the feet, struck it against the wall and killed it,” then “threw it in the well of the house,” suffered a similar fate.⁷¹ Even after famed Joan of Arc died at the stake from smoke inhalation in Rouen, the executioners spent the next eight hours ensuring that her remains were obliterated by fire.⁷² There are some regional variations, however; in Germany some female criminals were drowned, so that the purifying force of the water carried the corpse away.⁷³

Decapitation as corporal punishment carried a whole litany of meanings in the Middle Ages. From a literary perspective, severed heads play a role in the hagiography of cephalophoric saints and in vernacular Nordic epics, like *Beowulf* or in the Middle High German *Nibelungenlied*.⁷⁴ From a practical point of view, judicial authorities could choose the sentence of decapitation because it was the clearest proof of the death of an offender. Even after the head was detached, it could be appropriately displayed while preserving the facial identity of the criminal. Historically, though, this was a punishment primarily reserved for men of noble status. In Germanic penal law, it was perhaps the earliest prescribed punishment for rape.⁷⁵

But it evolved, in England in particular, as something reserved for heads of state or heads of household who had committed acts of treason. Apparently, William the Conqueror brought this tradition to England, and instilled the notion of employing it to keep the nobles in line by displaying the severed heads as a sign

69 Geremek, *Margins of Society* (see note 17), 20.

70 Folke Ström, *On the Sacral Origin of the Germanic Death Penalties* (Stockholm: Wahlström & Widstrand, 1942), 210.

71 Gonthier, *Le châtimement du crime* (see note 60), 164.

72 Larissa Juliette Taylor, *The Virgin Warrior: The Life and Death of Joan of Arc* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 167.

73 Ström, *On the Sacred Origin of the Germanic Death Penalties* (see note 70), 171–78.

74 See, for example, the many articles of *Heads Will Roll: Decapitation in the Medieval and Early Modern Imagination*, ed. Larissa Tracy and Jeff Massey. *Medieval and Renaissance Authors and Texts*, 7 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012). Ström, *On the Sacral Origins* (see note 70), 166–67.

75 Ström, *On the Sacral Origins* (see note 70), 162.

of his power.⁷⁶ Here, status protected them for more gruesome executions, as it served as a quicker, less painful death. But it also signified that because the nobleman had undermined his position of prominence and authority, it was only fitting that his death involved him losing his head. English sovereign powers chose to perform their restoration of order and justice and to symbolize their power over the living through decapitation, while French authorities preferred hanging as its primary mode of punishment.

By the sixteenth century, then, when Henry VIII of England encountered marital problems with Anne Boleyn and later Katherine Howard, he could sentence them to decapitation for the crime of treason. And this provides an opportunity to start to think about the connection between gender and punishment, before returning to the case of Clare de Portet in Toulouse. Both Anne Boleyn and Katherine Howard were found guilty of sexual crimes, and destined for death at the Tower of London. For Anne, her charge of adultery should have carried the penalty of being burned alive, but Henry commuted it to decapitation. Thea Cervone argues that the men surrounding the king (including Thomas Cromwell) considered Anne Boleyn an outspoken, sexy, and powerful threat to their influence, and the only way to keep her quiet was by removing her head from her body.⁷⁷ But for both queens, their status protected them from a public beheading or a public display of their severed heads. Instead, they were executed in the Tower with a small audience to witness their final moments of (reported) dignity before death. Henry even granted Anne's request to be killed by a French swordsman rather than an English axman, which suggests that her femininity warranted some civility in her treatment. Cervone cites Samuel Edgerton's description between the two execution styles:

The English preferred to behead their victims by having the latter kneel with their heads bent downward awkwardly on a block, with the headsman chopping downward in the unbecoming manner of a peasant splitting wood. More preferred on the Continent, however, was having the victim kneel with head erect, indeed, in the manner of saying one's prayers, with the headsman this time wielding not a plebian axe but a patrician broadsword, and swinging it elegantly sideways like a tennis racket.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Howard Engel, *Lord High Executioner: An Unashamed Look at Hangmen, Headsmen, and their Kind* (Willowdale, Ontario: Firefly Books, 1996), 106.

⁷⁷ Thea Cervone, "'Tucked Beneath her Arm': Culture, Ideology, and Fantasy in the Curious Legend of Anne Boleyn." *Heads Will Roll* (see note 74), 289–310; here 290–91.

⁷⁸ Samuel Edgerton, "When Even Artists Encouraged the Death Penalty," *Law and Literature* 15.2 (2003): 235–65; here 244.

Cervone suggests that Anne's request to be executed in the French style gave a "lady-like" theatricality to the proceedings, even though in death, Anne suffered the injustice of being buried in an arrow box.⁷⁹ For these English queens, their sex and sexuality rendered their actions seditious to the king by jeopardizing the legitimate succession to the throne, which made them legally deserving of decapitation. Their social rank shielded them from a punitive spectacle, and allowed at least Anne Boleyn a more dignified beheading, a luxury, as we shall see, that a lesser woman would not receive for the murder of her spouse.

This final section begins with some of the same questions that opened this article: what was it about the circumstances of Toulouse's Clare de Portet crime that warranted a judicial dispute of its magnitude? What compelled authorities to construct this distinctive environment around her execution and death? The answer to these questions may very well lay in the rank of this young French woman's slain husband. According to the archival records, her husband was a royal sergeant who, while stationed in Portet, married Clare, a local girl. From a broader political perspective, this case took place during the Hundred Years' War, when the prestige of the monarchy and its royal authority was drastically undermined by the looming threat of English forces. Throughout France, even during periods of truce, displaced marauders and soldiers caused chaos in the countryside, which heightened a sense of obligation and action from judicial authorities. Although both Cohen's work in Paris and Jacques Rossiad's study of Dijon confirmed that the war did not dramatically alter the nature of crime in the cities, still, the increase in thefts and robberies in the rural areas impacted perceptions of justice for urban administrations.⁸⁰

Cohen believes that during the Hundred Years' War, Parisian officials considered "the power of law ... geared to keep order so as to uphold authority," and that crime was perceived as "not a violation of law or justice, but merely as a transgression against the power of authority."⁸¹ In this era of social displacement and persistent instability, royal administrators grasped at opportunities to main-

⁷⁹ Cervone, "Tucked Beneath her Arm" (see note 77), 297.

⁸⁰ Jacques Rossiad, "Prostitution, Youth and Society in the Towns of Southeastern France in the Fifteenth Century," *Deviants and the Abandoned in French Society*, ed. Robert Forster and Orest Ranum. Selections from the *Annales: Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, 4 (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 1–46; here 7.

⁸¹ Esther Cohen, "The Hundred Years' War and Crime in Paris, 1332–1488," *The Civilization of Crime: Violence in Town and Country since the Middle Ages*, ed. Eric A. Johnson and Eric H. Monkkonen (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 109–24; here 121.

tain their legitimate relevance, and this required a firm control over the semblance of order and a certain amount of credible privilege for their officers.

That being said, the disappearance of a royal sergeant in Portet would not pass unnoticed for long, which brought authorities to Clare's door months after the murder, and placed her case in the jurisdiction of the royal seneschal. In this circumstance, the fact that the seneschal employed such an extensive punishment for Clare could suggest that gender was not always a determining factor in rendering executions, and that here was a circumstance where a woman's crime was an attack not only on the head of her household, but also a representative head of state. And so the only fitting final punishment was decapitation, regardless of her sex. He sentenced her to lose all of her goods to the crown, and she ran the streets of the city as was fitting for a wife found guilty of adultery. It is possible that her husband's rank elevated her to a more privileged status that afforded her transportation in a chariot to the site of her execution. But unlike the English wives of Henry VIII, this position did not protect Clare de Portet from a public execution and a very deliberate display of her head and body after death. By sending her severed head to Portet, it demonstrated the extension of royal justice beyond the provincial capital of Toulouse. It was perhaps imperative in light of the larger concerns of the war that the seneschal decided to make an example of Clare, as a means to prove their effectiveness in the local legal realm, to establish that not even a woman was exempt from the ramifications of this type of treason and treachery against a royal official. Again, in this era of military volatility, maybe perceptions of order transcended perceptions of gender.

It is also important to remember that the only reason the scenario is preserved in the archives of Toulouse is because of the jurisdictional dispute which followed. On that day of the execution back in 1428, the municipal capitols and their officers did not stop and mount Clare de Portet's chariot outside of the town hall (Fig. 2) on its way to her decapitation out of compassion toward her sex or conviction of her innocence. And no one from the audience came to her defense, when there are instances in medieval corporal punishment that the condemned was saved from imminent death by the crowd's reaction or an official reprieve. In 1443, a crowd saved four clerks out of reverence of their office from execution in Amiens by grabbing the cart from executioners, and escorting the prisoners to asylum and safety.⁸² A female could step forward and propose marriage to a criminal. Officials perceived this arrangement as an option to reintegrate the criminal back into society, saved by domesticity and the opportunity

⁸² Dean, *Crime in Medieval Europe* (see note 7), 136.



Fig. 2: The town hall shown above was built at various stages throughout the eighteenth century, and is situated upon the same location of the medieval building. Throughout the years, the vast square in front served as the primary location for protests and demonstrations against political and economic policies, and in the fifteenth century, it was the site of dramatic clash between the municipal capitols and royal officials over the death of Clare de Portet. Its centralized place in the city space ensured an audience for any punitive spectacle. (Photo by author.)

to serve the community by marrying an unwed spinster or a reformed prostitute.⁸³

But to some men, this was a fate worse than death, having to spend the rest of his life with an unwanted woman.⁸⁴ Instead of these valiant endeavors, this protest in Toulouse signaled the municipal capitols' refusal to surrender their power and role in the judicial process to the royal seneschal. The records indicate that the commotion surrounding Clare de Portet's chariot lasted two hours, as the crowd of Toulousains grew and tensions became more heated. The municipal capitols complained that the royal judge did not have the author-

⁸³ Cohen, "To Die a Criminal" (see note 50), 295.

⁸⁴ Cohen, *Crossroads of Justice* (see note 44), 194.

ity to hear cases of crimes committed in the city and vicariate of Toulouse. That right, they claimed, had been granted to the capitols by King Philip III in 1283. Philip mandated that the capitols had the right to preside over all trials concerning crimes committed in the city and surrounding territory of Toulouse in the name of the king, thus establishing the local officials as the first source of justice for the citizens. A royal official sat in on the trials, purely as an observer. The capitols interrogated defendants and witnesses, handled lawyers, and rendered their verdicts. But the final step in the criminal process, actually punishing the convicted criminal, had to be approved by the royal vicar or his representative.⁸⁵ With the proclamation in 1283, King Philip theoretically shifted the power to punish out of the hands of the capitols and into the vicar's, thus placing his royal representative at the top of the local judicial hierarchy.

In medieval France, the right to punish criminals gave legitimacy to political administrations, both royal and municipal. Toulouse's capitols held on to this privilege well into the fourteenth century (and seemingly into the fifteenth century), in direct defiance of the king's proclamations, for several reasons. The public nature of criminal punishments allowed Toulouse's population to be involved in the civic rituals of law and order. The spectacle not only assured the constituents that their local officials fulfilled the obligations of their office, but it also provided the people with the ritual elements of punishments they demanded for justice. In addition, the capitols aspired to subvert royal authority and dominance in the city, and to maintain autonomy and resistance to the royal vicar and his guards who had intruded upon their jurisdictional territory. Municipal and royal leaders fought to secure the power to punish criminals because the process demonstrated authority to the city's inhabitants through horrific spectacle, performed in the living and working space of Toulouse. Public punishments bound the citizens (as spectators) with their officials (as enforcers) in the restoration of law and order within the community.

So, in the case of Clare de Portet, the capitols claimed that the royal seneschal's death sentence was completely void, because his court did not alert them about the trial and verdict until after the fact. But, as the husband was a royal sergeant, the seneschal's officials insisted that this trumped the capitols' claims over the case. It is hard to believe that either side debated these issues very eloquently in the heat of the moment, surrounded by a mob of spectators and officers holding arms. After several hours, the capitols refused to release their hold on the cart (and we can imagine that Clare de Portet was no doubt confused and perhaps a bit optimistic of escaping death), and the highest officials retired to a

85 AMT-AA3:4, and duplicated in registers AA4:1, AA5:30, AA53:27.

nearby church of Saint Barthélémy to continue the discussion. Eventually they decided that the only solution was to appeal the matter to the royal Parlement (which was meeting in Poitiers) and to the Count of Foix, who served as lieutenant general. The municipal officers escorted Clare to the prison in the town hall, where she waited for four years until May 16, 1432, justice prevailed for the crown and a royal executioner finally decapitated Clare de Portet. For delaying the proceedings and for questioning the authority of the crown, Parlement ordered the city of Toulouse to pay 10,000 gold coins and to forfeit a portion of their criminal jurisdiction.

In the end, what is most striking to me is that there is no indication anywhere in the archival records of the dispute surrounding Clare de Portet that this punishment for a woman—who took a lover, murdered her husband, hid his body in her house, and lived alongside it with her accomplice—was anything but appropriate. Of course, there is always the possibility that municipal and royal officials had this real conversation and a notary failed to record it in the jurisdictional proceedings. But its absence could suggest that by the fifteenth century, gender or sex of the offender played less of a role in the execution of justice as we might have assumed, and that maybe this public and extreme punishment of a woman was more commonplace than we might have understood. Ultimately, we may consider that this case speaks more about the male authorities' desire to perform their power through control of public punishments, rather than any hesitation or reservation on the behalf of officials toward decapitating a female murder. To the judicial system of fifteenth-century Toulouse, Clare's beheading fit the crime that upset the status quo of both the household and the kingdom. And so her death filled a purpose of establishing a semblance of royal order in an environment that was perpetually threatened by a myriad of disorders.

Sharon Diane King (UCLA Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies)

“Je viens .../d’estrangle contrée”: Medieval French Comedy Envisions the Afterlife

Proof of heaven may still be up in the air, but what comes from books about heaven one can take to the bank. Consider the success of the current film based on the “inspirational” testimonial book¹ (a skeptic might term it “schlock doc”) *Heaven Is For Real*, number three at the box office the weekend it opened.² Western culture has long mitigated the harshness of death by belief in a life beyond the grave, and our fascination with what lies beyond—or beneath, for the unfortunate—is ongoing. In late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century Europe, most theatrical representations of the afterlife were serious—dare one say grave—scenes of supernatural resurrection or infernal torment. Yet if death is a human constant, so is comedy, and thus also a comic grappling with human transience. In France during this era, comic plays dealing specifically with the afterlife³ presented characters claiming to have come back from the dead,

1 Recent sensational English-language books on this topic include Lisa Miller, *Heaven: Our Enduring Fascination with the Afterlife* (New York: Harper, 2010); Don Piper, *90 Minutes in Heaven* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 2004), which has sold five million copies; Todd Burpo, *Heaven is for Real: A Little Boy's Astounding Story of His Trip to Heaven and Back* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2010); Raymond Moody, *Paranormal: My Life in Pursuit of the Afterlife* (New York: HarperCollins, 2013) and Bill Wiese, *23 Minutes in Hell: One Man's Story About What He Saw, Heard, and Felt in That Place of Torment* (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2006).

2 http://finance.yahoo.com/news/low-budget-religious-movie-heaven-150900645.html;_ylt=A0SO8zoHW1VTTSwA_01XNyoA;_ylu=X3oDMTB0cmU0Ymt0BHNIYwNzYwRjb2xvA2dxMQR2dGlkA1ZJUDM3MF8x (last accessed Oct. 14, 2014).

3 The comic plays of this era in France abound with the trappings of mortality. There are *sermons joyeux* involving parodic saints whose comical martyrdoms and posthumous miracles are recounted like culinary delights (and other fleshly pleasures)—*Saint Hareng*, *Saint Raisin*, *Saint Onion*, *Saint Jambon et Sainte Andouille* (Saint Herring, Saint Grape, Saint Onion, Brother Ham and Sister Sausage); an excellent edition is *Recueil de sermons joyeux*, éd. crit. avec introd., notes et glossaire par Jelle Koopmans. Textes littéraires français, 362 (Geneva: Droz, 1988). Some farces involve deathbed histrionics, like the sui generis *Maître Pierre Pathelin*; others showcase eleventh-hour confessions by characters confronting their mortality, with or without good reason, such as *Le pourpoint rétréci* and *Celui qui se confesse à sa voisine*. There are plays in which characters relate supernatural visions, revealed later to be mere tools for personal gain or religiopolitical ends: *Jenin Jehan, vrai prophète* and the rather late (1599) anti-Protestant satire *Frère Fecisti*. Some plays parody the making and reading of wills—*Le testament Pathelin*, *Les bâtarde de Caux*—while others spoof the ceremonies of mourning or show people disguised

with visions of heaven, purgatory, or hell. But just as the twentieth-century musical *Guys and Dolls* has an inveterate gambler conjure up a fake dream of heaven and hell (in the song “Sit Down, You’re Rockin’ the Boat”) in order to get himself and his fellows out of a sticky predicament with the law,⁴ these late medieval and early modern comedies also used the fears and hopes of the afterlife to suit their own ends. In them, otherworldly concerns are interlarded with timeless comic techniques—parody, satire, misdirection—to show how easily they can evoke the most mundane of human frailties, or can be manipulated to decidedly earthly advantage.

We are all familiar with the trope: someone has been to hell and back, and has stories to tell. Most Western versions of this are fearful: Orpheus’s tragic journey, Dante’s harrowing poetic visions, the chilling torments of the Winchester brothers on the current TV series *Supernatural*. But the *descente en enfer* has humorous variants as well. The anonymous northern French late fifteenth-century farce *Martin de Cambrai*⁵ is one of these, a marvel of misdirection and inventive bravado. Martin, a ne’er-do-well cobbler, argues with his scold of a wife and locks her up inside the house, ostensibly to keep her from straying while he goes out to ply his trade. To no avail: the stereotypically lusty village priest comes calling and arranges, via a conversation through the keyhole, a way the two of them can keep assignations without Martin’s suspicion. When Martin returns, he again quarrels with his wife, cursing her by uttering a variant of the commonplace “The devil take you”; the priest, now disguised as a demon, immediately appears, shrieking the stereotypically diabolic “Brou hou,”⁶ and whisks her away, presumably to hell. The priest, out of his disguise, later checks

as demons and corpses to effect the most animatedly carnal of purposes—*Robinet badin*, *Regnault*, *Les trois amoureux de la croix*. One of my favorites is a fools’ play—though Gustave Cohen deemed it a farce—in which the threat of real death is invoked by an allegorical figure (Dame Justice) against the three main characters. But these fools have been so shocked at the vices of the world (recited in appropriately foolish ways) that they can no longer be surprised by the certitude and commonality of death. See *La farce des esbahis* in Gustave Cohen, ed., *Recueil de farces françaises inédites du XVe siècle* (Cambridge, MA: The Medieval Academy of America, 1949), 21–25.

⁴ Western representations of the afterlife on stage and screen include the torments of hell variously configured in *Huis Clos*, *Damn Yankees*, *Jerry Springer: The Opera*, and *The Book of Mormon*; the delights of heaven are figured forth in such plays or musicals as *Carousel*, *Guys and Dolls*, *Metamorphoses* and *Xanadu: The Musical*.

⁵ Anonymous, *Martin de Cambrai*, in André Tissier, ed., *Recueil de Farces 1450–1550* (Geneva: Droz, 1998), Tome XII, 143–204.

⁶ A variant of the devilish cry “brou ha ha” (the origin of the well-known term). See André de la Vigne, *La farce du meunier de qui le diable emporte l’ame en enfer*, in Tissier, *Recueil de farces 1450–1550* (Geneva: Droz, 1989), Tome IV, 241.

in on Martin; the latter, in despair, relates that following his curse, his wife was carted off by a devil in a most alacritous manner: “Aussitot que j’eus dit le mot” (l. 334, As soon as the words left my mouth).

The priest, in a delightful bit of comico-dramatic irony, actually starts out disputing Martin’s claim: it was NOT the devil at all, indeed, such a visit is utterly fanciful—“Ne croiez jamais que le Diable / Soit cy venu, c’est moquerie” (ll. 347–48, Do not ever think that the devil / Has come here, that’s nonsense). But when Martin stubbornly sticks to his story, and asks the priest to query the public about the wife’s whereabouts (which he does in a direct address to the audience that makes them comically complicit), the priest reverses himself, urging Martin to get on his knees and pray fervently for his wife’s return. His actions constitute a sophisticated psychological trick to gain Martin’s trust so as to better exploit it, setting the gullible cobbler up to believe he can only get his wife back by forswearing jealousy forever.⁷

At this critical juncture, the wife is dropped off by the very same demon, assuring her astonished husband that she has emerged “D’enfer tout droit!” (325, l. 436, straight from hell), where she experienced torments (l. 432). But, she reports, her close encounter with the infernal was most instructive: down below, amongst the numerous tailors, bakers, hosiers, and cordwainers, she witnessed an especial abundance ... of cobblers: “Principalement (de) savetiers / ... / Je cuide et croy certainement, / Par ma foy, qu’il y seront tous” (ll. 444, 446–47, Mostly cobblers / ... / I think and believe most certainly, / By my faith, they’re all there). Yet it is in fact the jealous husbands—by her account the most tormented of all—that are in such massive supply that hell is running out of room: “Et si y a tant de jaloux / Que on ne scait ou les bouter” (ll. 447–48, And there are so many jealous [husbands] / They don’t know where to put them). To Martin’s timorous query “Et lesquels sont plus tourmentés?” (l. 450, Which are the most tormented?) the wife makes the pointed riposte: “Les jaloux!” (l. 451, The jealous [husbands]!)⁸ The reply so horrifies Martin that he begs his wife’s forgiveness for confining her and promises her complete freedom. The two reconcile. The

⁷ Martin’s prayer is also a little gem of comedy: he addresses seemingly every saint he can think of in no particular order, including “Saint Pierre, saint Pol et Notre Dame” (l. 425, Saint Peter, Saint Paul and Our Lady—in my translation for performance [1994] “To Peter, Paul, and Mary too!”). His orison is also part bribery: “Et chascun d’eux aura demain / Une chandelle ...” (ll. 427–28, And each of them will tomorrow receive / A candle)—he pledges, if his wife is returned.

⁸ As Tissier notes, the concept of jealous husbands being sent to hell recurs in at least one other farce (also involving a falsified demon!): *Le retrait* (The Privy). See Tissier, *Recueil de Farces* (see note 5), Tome XII, 201.

concept of hell here has a most earthly utility: the infernal afterlife, fictitious to all (including the audience!) except Martin, is convincingly portrayed by his wife's well-chosen words, the demon's appearances, and the priest's hints. All these elements prey on Martin's credulity and guilt enough to guarantee the wife's free-and-easy future *liaisons dangereuses*.⁹

The demonic underworld evoked in the late fifteenth-century Parisian farce *La Résurrection Jenin à Paulme*¹⁰ shows that sometimes even hell is not always what it's cracked up to be.¹¹ The play begins as a parody of the resurrection scene in passion plays, with a Mary Magdalene figure named "La seur Jenin"¹² who traditionally comes, alone or with the other Maries, to the tomb only to find Jesus AWOL.¹³ La Seur's mournful plaint is a *précis* of the drawn-out laments of her dramatic counterpart: "Or est mon frere Jenin mort / Dont j'ay au cueur ung dur remort" (ll. 1–2, Now my brother Johnny is dead / For which I feel a great wound in my heart). She then asks, in a direct address to the audience using a variant of the Easter trope *quem queritis*, if anyone has seen him: "L'a vous point veu icy venir?" (l. 3, Have you seen him come here?).

Yet Johnny, it emerges, is hardly a saint: he had fled his tormentors in part because he was this very unreformed Magdalen's pimp, her procurer to the clergy, among whom she was a popular guest: "En ces cloistres, en ces couvens / ... / J'estoye partout la bien venue." (ll. 57, 59, In these cloisters, in these convents / ... / I was welcomed everywhere). Johnny's *soi-disant* sister has her resources, of

9 The farce *Le savetier Audin* starts out with a very similar plot but ends with the lovers running off, without delving into the infernal depths, at least in the husband's imagination.

10 His name—Johnny Palmer, in English—variously puns on Palm Sunday, the pall covering the dead, and possibly even his past profession as lightfingered cutpurse.

11 Anonymous, *La farce nouvelle de la Résurrection Jenin à Paulme*, in Gustave Cohen, ed., *Recueil de farces françaises* (see note 3), 405–11. See also Bernard Faivre, *Répertoire des farces françaises des origines à Tabarin* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1993), and Tissier, *Recueil de Farces 1450–1550* (Geneva: Droz, 1997), Tome XI, 25.

12 The Magdalen's use of the phrase "mon frère" to refer to Jesus occurs in some French passion plays, among them the anonymous text *La Résurrection de Notre Seigneur*. See *La Résurrection de Notre Seigneur* in *Mystères inédits du 15ème siècle*, ed. Achille Jubinal, vol. 2 (Paris: Techener, 1837), 356.

13 These include (but are not limited to) the aforementioned *La résurrection de Notre Seigneur*, the anonymous play *La passion du Palatinus*, ed. Grace Frank (Paris: Champion, 1972), the anonymous play *Le mystère de la passion Notre Seigneur*, ed. Graham Runnalls (Geneva: Droz, 1974), the anonymous *La passion d'Autun*, ed. Grace Frank (Paris: Société des anciens textes français, 1934), and the anonymous play *La passion des jongleurs*, ed. Anne Joubert and Amari Perry (Paris: Beauchesne, 1981).

course: namely Joachim, in passion play tradition the father of Mary,¹⁴ who here charts quite a different course as he offers to take Jenin’s place as her procurer “aussi volontiers / Que fist oncques vostre frère” (ll. 36–37, as willingly / as ever your brother did). Indeed, Joachim waxes eloquent in describing how well they will do in their collaboration: “Parbieu, je ne vous fauldray pas, / ... / Croyez-moy, nous ferons grant chère!” (ll. 74, 76, My word, I will not fail you / ... / Believe me, we will rake it in!).

But Joachim’s dreams of avarice vanish abruptly, for all at once up springs Jenin, laughing with glee, dancing and singing: “Hy! Hy! je te jou!” (l. 90, Ha ha! I’m playing [with] you!). “Vecy Jenin ressuscité” (l. 104, Here’s Johnny, come back to life) says La Seur in amazement, welcoming him back into the earthly realm. Where has he come from? His first words are mysterious, if not downright cagey: “D’où je viens? / Par ma foy d’estrangle contrée, / ... / “Trois lieues dela soleil levant” (ll. 110–11, 113, Where have I come from? By my faith, from a strange land / ... / Three leagues from the rising sun). He then alters his tale somewhat, claiming to have emerged “d’Enfer d’icy tout droit,” (l. 115, come here straight from hell) a place of pitiful torments (l. 117). But the details are very sketchy, and the people in hell rather specifically delineated—“Gilbert Cochet,” “poor Alain” and “Charles qui tua le hongre” (l. 129, Charles who killed the Hungarian)¹⁵—thus characters seemingly well known to the audience. Even more oddly, they are said to be due to be released from their infernal confinement shortly: “Attendez-les dedans deux moys,” Johnny announces cheerfully (l. 133, Expect them within two months).¹⁶

Hell, it would seem, is nothing more than the prison of Chatelet in Paris,¹⁷ and Jenin’s resurrection is nothing more than his release.¹⁸ His comrades celebrate his coming forth from the pit, two companions joining the rest in drinking riotously, singing lusty songs, and otherwise disporting themselves: “Il vesse comme un pourceau,” La seur Jenin teases him (l. 251, He farts like a pig). The friends even plot, in Rabelaisian style, the founding of a new convent dedicated

14 He gives parodic reference to this when he swears by “benoiste Vierge Marie” (l. 8, blessed Virgin Mary) in his very first line.

15 The line could alternatively be read as “Charles who killed the eunuch.”

16 See Cohen, *Recueil de farces françaises* (see note 3), xxiv, and Faivre, *Répertoire* (see note 11), 383.

17 As Cohen, in *Recueil de farces françaises* (see note 3), xxiii, notes, the text references well-known taverns in Paris—François Villon’s favorite Pomme de Pin, and the Bourg l’Abbé.

18 Jail was similarly linked to the infernal depths in the work of the sixteenth-century poet Clément Marot. See Faivre, *Répertoire* (see note 11), 383, and Tissier, *Recueil de Farces* (see note 11), Tome XI, 25.

to Saint Baboyn (saint Doodad or Fiddle-Faddle)¹⁹ for those “resurrected”—i.e., sprung from the pokey—like Jenin.²⁰ In this play, the infernal “strange country” is simply a useful earthly metaphor for a bad place visited by all too many. Hell is Other ... Places.

For a true taste of a comically-envisioned Christian hell at the end of the fifteenth century, we must plumb the depths of André de la Vigne’s farce *Le meunier de qui le diable emporte l’ame en enfer*,²¹ arguably the most documented humorous theatrical event of deviltry in this era in France.²² Originally slotted for staging at a critical juncture in the larger performance of a Saint Martin play at Seurre in 1496, the farce—whose source is Rutebeuf’s well-known *fabliau Le pet au vilain*—was wrenched out of place and hurriedly staged in order to keep the audience from leaving the performance site following heavy rain showers.²³ The play seems to have worked, providing a case study of how effective farces were at doing their job of holding an audience’s interest, or, as the saying goes in the film industry, “keeping butts in seats.”²⁴ The farce is also of note in documenting the (planned) re-use of some characters from the larger saint’s drama in the farce: to wit, the devil and his demonic minions.²⁵ The play has dual settings, the first the eponymous miller’s home, where the much-maligned tradesman is suffering from a terrible gastrointestinal malady. His fears of imminent death (which he mitigates by copious bouts of drinking) are shrugged off by his ill-tempered wife, but the miller does receive a visit from the priest, who comes disguised (badly) as a relative. True to his farcical stereotype, the cleric is of course less interested in how the miller fares than how much canoodling (amidst wining and dining) he can achieve with the man’s wife behind the mill-

19 Like the Abbaye de Thélème, which the text seems to anticipate, the order would be founded on anti-regulations: not rising in the morning, sleeping until 6 a.m., drinking, singing matins over a pot of wine (ll. 231–34).

20 Ll. 270–71.

21 *La farce du meunier*, Tissier, *Recueil de Farces* (see note 6), Tome IV, 169–243.

22 See *Le mystère de saint Martin*, ed. André Duplat (Geneva: Droz, 1979); see also Edouard L. Kerdaniel, *Un auteur dramatique du XVe siècle: André de la Vigne* (Paris: Champion, 1923).

23 *Le meunier*, Tissier, *Recueil de Farces* (see note 6), Tome IV, 178–79. See also Faivre, Répertoire, (see note 11), 297–99.

24 They actually did depart after the farce (supposedly to pray for dry weather) but came back the next day; this play thus served as a kind of teaser for the full performance. See *Le meunier*, Tissier, *Recueil de Farces* (see note 6), Tome IV, 177–82.

25 It is the only farce known to have demons—as demons—play such an extended active role. See *Le meunier*, Tissier, *Recueil de Farces* (see note 6), Tome IV, 176. The play’s documentation also relates an ironic footnote: during the saint’s play, Satan’s costume caught fire “autour des fesses” but the hellfire he came into contact with was speedily put out and he was able to resume his role. See *Le meunier*, Tissier, *Recueil de Farces* (see note 6), Tome IV, 180.

er’s back. For her part, the callous wife cannot wait for her husband to be in his grave, even dreaming of a new dress if death relieves her of his care. The miller, writhing in agony, makes hilariously embarrassing revelations to his “cousin,” including his one solace: his vision of how he will make his wife pay for her mistreatment of him “Se jamais de santé joys” (l. 210, If I ever enjoy the benefits of sainthood).

The play’s other setting is a stereotypically noisy hell full of demons,²⁶ where Lucifer, king of the devils, begins the play with his traditional terrifying bellow “Haro!” Yet this Lucifer is also a slightly pathetic figure, seething with anger and yet stricken by sorrow at his lessening power due to Saint Martin’s ministrations up top (alluded to in the framing saint’s play)²⁷:

Haro! deables d’enffer, j’enraige!
Je meurs de dueil, je pers le sens.
J’ay laissé puissance et couraige,
Pour la grant douleur que je sens. (ll. 318–21)

[GRRR! Devils of hell, I’m in a rage!
I die of grief, I’m losing my mind.
I’ve lost my strength and my courage
Because of the great sorrow I feel.]

The teeming horde of his henchpersons—for the five demons onstage represent “mil et cinq cens” demons in hell (l. 322, one thousand five hundred)—fly to his side but are in no hurry to bestir themselves. Indeed, they seem contented with Hell’s status quo, Satan declaring “Et je me passe / De demander une aultre charge” (ll. 338–39, And I see no need to request another task). Foully cursing his underlings for their complacency—“Coquins, palliarts,” “Filz de putain” (ll. 326, 347, Rogues, wretches, whoresons)—Lucifer demands they scour the earth to bring back “L’ame d’aulcune creature” (l. 353, the soul of some [human] being). When the naive demon Berith timidly inquires from whence

26 For this large performance there seems to have been a traditionally-constructed Hellmouth, from which the demons entered the stage. The farce lists five of them, including one female (Proserpine) all from the saint’s play, making this one of the most character-intensive plays in the farcical canon. See Duplat; see also *Le meunier*, Tissier, *Recueil de Farces* (see note 6), Tome IV, 183, and notes to 226–27.

27 There are numerous rhetorical parallels to the saint’s play embedded in the farce, some indicating how hard the devils are having to work to counteract Saint Martin’s holy activities. See *Le meunier*, Tissier, *Recueil de Farces* (see note 6), Tome IV, notes to 229–30.

this soul might emanate,²⁸ Lucifer sarcastically responds that it departs “par le fondament” (l. 358, from the nether regions). Berith departs, envisioning an easy task before him: “j’en auray subtillement / Ung millier pour moins d’un escu” (ll. 360–61, By trickery I will get / A thousand for less than an écu).

Back on earth, the miller demands the priest be summoned so he can make his final confession; in a great sight gag, the latter resumes his priestly habiliments before the audience, then immediately rejoins the miller, to perform his job. Meanwhile, Berith, armed with a large sack, swoops in and stations himself under the miller’s bed, bragging how he will do the man a kindness as he captures his soul: “Munyer, je vous voys soulager” (l. 375, Miller, I will ease your pain). The miller, having confessed to over-imbibing and (stereotypically) frequently cheating customers at his mill,²⁹ suddenly recognizes that his near-death experience is merely an abominable—or more precisely abdominal—case of constipation. “Ostez-vous, car je me conchye,” he tells the priest (l. 433, Get out, I’m taking a shit!), and promptly relieves himself—onstage, no less—back into good health. Berith, who has taken Lucifer’s words literally—as all good *badins* do³⁰—scoops up his “soul,” depositing it in his bag, and proudly scurries back to hell with it: “Que proye nouvelle apporte” (l. 449, I bring you new prey). Of course, when the sack is opened before the prepared cauldron, the demons discover quite another burden, one which fills them with disgust: “Que deable esse cy? Se semble merde toute pure!” (ll. 456–57, What the devil is this? / It looks like pure shit!).³¹ This “soul,” which Berith takes pains to explain is from a miller, is so vile it stinks up Lucifer himself (l. 468, “Je suis tout empuan-ty”), bringing Berith nothing but humiliation and a sound trouncing. Indeed, even after the bag is removed, they have to air Hell out: “Or, qu’il n’y ait coing ne carriere / D’enffer, que tout ne soit ouvert!” (ll. 465–66, Now let there be no corner or path / In hell that is not opened up!)

This short bit of theater was originally intended to complement the saint’s earthly encounters with and temptation by Satan and his triumph over them; in-

28 In the performance as originally it had been intended to be staged, this would have been quite ironic: in the saint’s play (l. 8011). Berith boasts of his prowess in luring human power-brokers (emperors, kings, and dukes) into war. There is also bathos in this scene, in Berith’s being reassigned to such a menial task as soul pick-up.

29 Like the miller of Chaucer’s “Miller’s Tale” in his *Canterbury Tales*.

30 The *badin* is a marvelous character type, of which there are numerous variants, one the French have eternally found delight in, even in other cultures (i.e., Jerry Lewis). See Charles Mazouer, *Le personnage du naif dans le théâtre comique du moyen âge à Marivaux* (Paris: Librairie Klincksieck, 1979).

31 Proving that the concept of “meta” has medieval roots, the devils swear by themselves.

deed the long saint’s play offers scenes of St. Martin’s soul ascending into heaven as well as many misadventures in the infernal realm.³² But there is nothing spiritually uplifting or edifying in this play that showcases humanity’s need for eternal vigilance against the demonic in the liminal state that is death. Instead the farce places its emphasis on very earthly matters—deception, betrayal, cuckoldry, dyspepsia—and concludes with Hell itself being turned upside down, all because of a decidedly human byproduct.

The anonymous *Cautelleux, Barat, et le villain*,³³ a rogue’s triumph of sketch comedy seamlessly knitted into a farce, twists human beliefs about Purgatory to serve the purposes of the two titular rascals. In the first of the play’s three scenes, the newly-formed pair of tricksters spy a poor peasant who loves his donkey not wisely but too well: “Mon martinet ... / tu m’as très bien servi longtemps” (ll. 63–64, My little Martin ... / You have long served me well), the simpleton peasant says, fondly recalling aloud the day seven years before when he had purchased the animal. These details give the con artists all the material they need. When the peasant leaves the ass to graze while he heads to the marketplace (scolding him mildly for nibbling at his fingers the day before), Barat slips off the animal’s bridle and leads him away. When the peasant returns, the other hoaxster, Cautelleux, has placed the bridle around his neck; he now rears up before the peasant, who babbles in terrified astonishment: “Hay, avant, bodet, ho! Jésus, / Benedicite dominus / Et credo ave Maria ...” (ll. 93–95, Ho, get down there, donkey, ho! Jesus— / God bless / And I believe in Hail Mary ...). Cautelleux explains that he is really his former beast of burden Martin, finally restored to human form after having taken the shape of an ass on earth as his purgatorial punishment:

Or ay ma penitence fait
Qu’on m’avait ordonné affaire,
Sortant du feu de Purgatoire,
Suis devenu asne sept ans,
Mais maintenant fine mon temps.

32 See Duplat; see also *Le meunier*, Tissier, *Recueil de Farces* (see note 6), Tome IV, 177–87 and the notes to the play in general that detail the tight relationship of saint’s play to the farce (169–243). For a delightful short study of the lore of St. Martin in general, see Martin W. Walsh, “Martin of Tours: A Patron Saint of Medieval Comedy,” *Saints: Studies in Hagiography*, ed. Sandro Sticca, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 141 (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1996), 283–315.

33 Anonymous, *La farce nouvelle à trois personnages [Cautelleux, Barat, et le Villain]*, in Gustave Cohen, ed., *Recueil de farces françaises* (see note 3), 87–93; here 87–89.

Si m'en vois droit en paradis,
 Là prieray Dieu pour mes amis (l. 103–09)

[Now I have served my penance,
 That was given to me to do,
 Coming out of the fires of Purgatory
 I became an ass for seven years,
 But now my time is served.
 I am headed straight for Paradise,
 Where I will pray God for my friends]

The credulous peasant, stricken with compassion for the longsuffering creature that has endured such pitiful confinement, of course sets him free, even coughing up a bit of pocket money so that the poor fellow might dine on something besides oats (l. 124). He bids Martin a sad farewell, leaving the two miscreants to abscond with both donkey and coin.

The scene—again, merely the first of three in which the two dupe the peasant—has delightfully amusing resonances with the loftiest of sacred concepts from sources both classical and biblical. In the rogue's tale, there is more than a hint of the Pythagorean notion of the transmigration of souls, by which a human soul can achieve immortality. The scene also evokes several details of the Old Testament story of Balaam and his ass (Numbers 22: 21–33)—in humorously convoluted ways, to be sure. According to the biblical text, Balaam's donkey, though still in animal form, has a story to tell to his master, just as Martin does in the farce. Balaam's ass is able to see the celestial visitor that Balaam is blind to, just as the peasant has for seven years not once glimpsed the "man" lying imprisoned within the donkey. The peasant has chided his beast, we know, in a gently comic version of Balaam mercilessly beating his animal due to his inability to perceive the spiritual being before them.

Finally, Balaam discovers that he was protected from angelic wrath by the presence of the ass (the angel informs him the donkey was the only reason he wasn't killed); similarly, the donkey tells the peasant he will receive the blest prayers of his friend and former servant, once he ascends to heaven. As with the other plays, these rogues prey on the supernatural beliefs of the peasant for their earthly gain; the afterlife is merely one tool from their emotional workbench that can pry material goods from this too-trusting victim.³⁴

³⁴ As Faivre observes, this play shows that hoaxes can be raised to the level of high art. See Faivre, *Répertoire* (see note 11), 86.

We progress upward with the anonymous 1523 fools' play *La sottie des Béguins*,³⁵ a sociopolitical satire from Geneva.³⁶ The play begins with a motley group of fools in deep mourning: their father Good Times is said to have been dead and gone for four years,³⁷ and Mere Folie his widowed mate rails against "faulce Mort" (l. 23, false Death) who always takes "ce qui vaut mieux" (l. 25, the most valuable one). Her grief onstage is mercifully brief: a messenger, "le poste" or "Printemps," (l. 26, Postman, Spring), all tricked out in green, arrives from Italy with a missive from none other than Bon Temps. He is not dead, the messenger reports; Mere Folie rejoices that he is at least "pas encore mort" (l. 55) —not dead yet. She has his letter read aloud. Bon Temps Jadis relates he is doing well, is penning the letter directly from "paradis"—about which we learn no more—and is ready for his Second Coming—but only if he can be reassured that the circumstances warrant:

Maintenant, si estes unis,
Si Justice ne craint point Force,
Si d'un bon prince estes fournis,
Si flatteurs ont receu l'escorce,
Si la voix du Commun a course,
Si libertez sont demeurez.... (ll. 108–13)

[Now, if you are as one,
If Justice does not fear Force
If you have been granted a good prince,
If flatterers have been flayed,
If the voice of the people has its way
And your liberties still remain]

The fools speak amongst themselves of the dangers Bon Temps had faced, and of his narrow escape from fines and imprisonment (ll. 135–41)—all references to very complex political machinations in Geneva at the dawn of the Reformation.³⁸

35 Anonymous, *La sottie des Béguins*, in *Recueil général des sotties*, ed. Emile Picot (Paris: Librairie de Firmin Didot, 1904), Tome II, 265–97.

36 Medieval French fools' plays, being preponderantly satires with specific political references and contemporary allusions, are in my experience the hardest to translate and the most challenging to reconstruct of all the theater of this era. Even much of the comedy is sadly obscure, though some physical bits and rhetorical devices still come through to readers and audiences.

37 The play in some ways almost seems to anticipate *Waiting for Godot*: were one to restage it, a suitable title might be *Waiting for Good Ol' Times*.

38 The circumstances of the play occur before the revolutions of Calvin, Luther, and Zwingli, but during the clamor against civic and clerical abuses that had begun to break forth in parts of Europe before the major reformers. The play seems to refer to the exile, then the return, cap-

Mère Folie promptly dictates a response: Good Times was accounted as dead, but his letter proves that reports of his death were, happily, greatly exaggerated. Since his departure, all performances have ceased, for fear of reprisals with the slightest pretext: “Joué n’avons moralité n’histoire; / Si nous eussions tant seulement toussy, / L’on nous eust fait aller en l’auditoire” (ll. 155–57, We have performed neither morality nor history / Had we done so much as cough / They would have brought us before a tribunal). But now the coast is clear, and flatterers have been sent to “perdition” (l. 165)—the opposite direction from Bon Temps’ safe haven. Throwing off their mourning cloaks, the company resumes their fools’ attire, though their clothes seem outmoded: “Mon Dieu, qu’ils sont desja caduques!” (l. 207, My God, they are already out of fashion!).³⁹ But because they now lack their distinctive fools’ hats—the *béguins* (bigginses) of the title—they cannot resume their foolish duties.⁴⁰ They remain in a kind of stasis, an earthly limbo. It is evident the heaven of this play, like the hell in *Jenin à Paulme*, is simply a metaphor for a place of terrestrial refuge, not a supernatural realm. The fools conclude by opting to wait for Bon Temps’ return, and as with the companions in *Jenin*, in the meantime follow a most human pursuit: drinking away their sorrows.

The celestial afterlife evoked in the early sixteenth-century farce *La résurrection de Jenin Landore*⁴¹ is more fleshed out, even if the play does read like an extended medieval “St. Peter at the pearly gates” joke. As with *Jenin à Paulme*, this comedy also begins with a woman’s lament over the deceased man that evokes the Mary scenes in passion plays: “Or il est mort, hélas, hélas! / Jenin Landore, mon mari!” (ll. 1–2, Now he is dead, alas, alas, / Johnny Landore, my husband!).

ture, and execution, of a minor political figure and fools’ company member in Geneva, Philibert Berthelier, in 1519; and the subsequent silencing of all the fools’ companies in Geneva for four years. See the introduction to the *Sottie des Béguins* (see note 35), 265–73.

³⁹ The whimsical wisdom of fools concentrated on extremely current cultural and social issues. How many of the skits of *Saturday Night Live* from four years ago would be fully comprehended and enjoyed by audiences today?

⁴⁰ The fate of their fools’ hats is quite detailed, no doubt fraught with allusions that are lost to modern readers. One fool swears the *béguins* were made into breeches by the women; another insists they were used to line the gowns of the lawyers of the town’s council (“advocats de parlement,” l. 214). New ones are cut out from Mère Folie’s ample chemise, but are found to be lacking the right ear, and thus not fit to perform in. This symbol of half-deafness could be an allusion to a local event, or perhaps to the scene of Peter in the New Testament striking the servant of the soldier during Christ’s arrest, and cutting off his ear. It might even refer to the docking of ears that marked ownership of animals: these fools were no longer free to speak their minds.

⁴¹ Anonymous, *La résurrection de Jenin Landore*, in Tissier, *Recueil de Farces* (see note 11), Tome XI, 21–58.

But the title character, reputed to be quite the imbibor, truly seems to have died—of thirst (l. 12); in fact, such was his bibulous prowess that he is said to have even demanded a drink as he was being buried (ll. 9–10). We can speedily conclude that in this play, death is another metaphor: Jenin was simply dead ... drunk. Of course, you can’t keep a good stiff down: almost immediately Jenin reappears alive once more (l. 31) having come straight “De paradis” (l. 33, from heaven) by way of the requisite detour through Purgatory (l. 36). Recognizable to all—“C’est luy, sans autre,” the priest avers (l. 41, That’s him, and no other), he has brought concrete evidence to prove his revivification: “Mon suaire en ay apporté” (l. 35, I have brought my shroud), possibly a tavern napkin or tablecloth.⁴² In another comical twist on the biblical story, it is the resurrected man’s wife who proclaims the *nole me tangere*: “Si ne veulx-je pas qu’il me touche” (l. 42, And I don’t want him to touch me). One envisions the still-popular scenario of someone recoiling from a stinking drunk ... and this one has been stinking somewhat longer than most.

But there is more to this play than an extended prank about overindulgence. For at this point Jenin launches into an account of heaven, wherein it seems all ‘hell’ has broken loose: “J’ay veu faire un terrible assault” (l. 47, I saw a terrifying assault waged). His dizzying tale includes witnessing Saint Peter with his key and Paul with his sword, symbols now used to work violence: Paul chops off Saint Denis’ head,⁴³ and gentle Saint Francis takes all of them on in battle. Then Saint Mark throws himself into the fray, as does Santiago, of Compostela fame. In his role of monitoring these bellicose activities, God awards Francis the victor’s palm, while poor Saint George is frustratingly sidelined (ll. 49–66). The celestial slugfest rages on: they must close the heavenly gates when the city is surrounded by fearsome Swiss *Landsknechte* (lansquenets), while Saint Lawrence roasts Swiss soldiers like winter sausages (ll. 69–88). God ends up having to share out a section of Paradise for every individual, as they all bitterly detest each other.⁴⁴

If any or all of this sounds suspiciously political, it would no doubt have seemed even more so to the audiences for whom it was intended, around 1512, during the wars of Italy, when allies were trading sides incessantly and a

⁴² Were I to stage this, I would use a worn tablecloth to serve as his “shroud,” preferably the red-and-white checked variety found in cheap, dimly-lit bars.

⁴³ Representations of the martyr Saint Denis traditionally show him holding his severed head, which was said to continue to preach sermons even after being lopped off. In addition to a political allegory, this detail might be an early modern instance of trademark recognition: even in Paradise Saint Denis must lose his head so the blessed will know who he is.

⁴⁴ This also has the ring of many a modern joke about heaven.

common religion was no barrier to hostilities.⁴⁵ But there is social satire as well.⁴⁶ In heaven, Jenin asserts, there are no trials or pleadings, no envy, or debate, and no lawyers (l. 126), solicitors (ll. 128, 132), or sergeants (ll. 138, 140).⁴⁷ Jenin Landore—whose name means good-for-nothing⁴⁸—further claims repeatedly he has returned with heavenly knowledge. But the abilities he enumerates are anything but spiritual: they include how to make women quiet (get them drunk, ll. 152–55), how to read palms (of those friends he knows well, ll. 167–72), how to speak “the Latin of Paradise” (otherwise known as bad Latin, ll. 174–78), and how to make himself invisible at will,⁴⁹ as all people who come back from heaven can (ll. 218–19). His wife observes comically that this is true—one never does see people who have returned from heaven (ll. 237–38). Of course, at the play’s end Jenin does literally disappear—but then, so does the rest of the cast. The play shows that heaven, whether that of drunks or of political allegory, has not elevated Johnny Rotten; rather, his sojourn there has brought the celestial afterlife down to a place where everyone can get a good belly laugh out of it.

A few pious souls in legend have bypassed death to head straight for the heavenly realms.⁵⁰ In farce, this can be a bumpy road. Heaven, like hell, can be used as a carrot to dangle in front of the unwary. In the late fifteenth-century

⁴⁵ *La résurrection*, Tissier, *Recueil de Farces* (see note 11), Tome XI, 27–29. The best estimate is that the farce dates from 1511–1512. The correspondances Tissier offers are admittedly only conjectures, but they make for a convincing argument—Saint Peter stands in for Rome, Saint Denis and Saint Francis (whose name, if nothing else, alludes to François I) signify France, Saint Mark is Venice, Santiago means Spain, Saint George signifies England, and so on.

⁴⁶ In Jenin’s account, other heavenly saints are also skewed from their normal orientations—Saint Michael has triumphed over a woman instead of a devil, Saint Christopher goes about mounted on a horse, and mighty St. Martin hoofs it on foot. There is misogyny here, certainly, but could this also be a commentary on inequality? And the followers of Saint Benedict are skewing off in two directions—surely an acknowledgement of the religious upheavals among the order’s followers at the time. See *La résurrection*, Tissier, *Recueil de Farces* (see note 11), Tome XI, l. 100, 44.

⁴⁷ One is reminded of the celebrated quote uttered by the rebel Butcher, “The first thing we do ... let’s kill all the lawyers” (*Henry VI Part 2*, IV, ii, l. 70, William Shakespeare, *Complete Works*, ed. Alfred Harbage (New York: Viking Press / Pelican, 1969). Jenin also declares that in heaven there is no war (l. 125), but this seems at variance with the detailed description of the aforementioned heavenly brouhaha.

⁴⁸ *La résurrection*, Tissier, *Recueil de Farces* (see note 11), Tome XI, 30–31.

⁴⁹ He achieves a “cloak of invisibility” by hiding behind the fishnets of St. Peter and St. Andrew (l. 218–19).

⁵⁰ There is also another farce in which heaven is evoked theoretically: the play *Trois galants et un badin*, in which the badin character dreams of himself as God. See *La résurrection*, Tissier, *Recueil de Farces* (see note 11), Tome XI, 26, note 12.

Swiss farce *Janot dans le sac*,⁵¹ Janot, the husband of the title,⁵² suspects his wife Janette of unfaithfulness, but as in *Martin de Cambrai*, is tripped up by his credulousness in matters spiritual. He’s also fatally susceptible to religious flattery. To her husband’s outraged accusations of dallying with “ung aultre amy” (l. 39, another friend) as Janette enters, she protests she was in church praying for her husband; when pressed she insists she was attending a neighbor’s funeral (ll. 19–31). All this to set the stage for the ruse to follow.⁵³ She reminds her husband how they took their vows before the priest in church (ll. 44–45), and reflects—hinting at his demise—they’ll end up there again, as is the common lot of man (ll. 46–50). Her deception-as-misdirection now begins in earnest: those who wish for sainthood, she declares, must needs frequent the church, as did the saints of yore, for no harm will befall those who pursue holy matters. Talk of sainthood catches Janot’s interest—and distracts him: “Se nous povions / Devenir saint en paradis!” (ll. 58–59, If we only could / Become saints in heaven!) he rhapsodizes. The wife points to their sow giving birth the night before—to ten piglets rather than six—as a sign their home is truly blessed (ll. 72–75).

But now the action onstage ramps up. For this farce includes a meta-theatrical bonus feature: a Fool that suddenly appears—perhaps popping up from a trap door—to comment on the action in irony-ridden asides.⁵⁴ He cynically notices how Janette plays her man to the hilt—“Elle a bien esté à l’escole!” (l. 66, she’s been to school)—and how her husband Janot is as pliable as “fromage mol,” (l. 69, soft cheese), veritably silly putty in her hands. To complicate the plot still further, an angel now arrives in the scene—of course, it is the wife’s lover in disguise—announcing he has come down to see Janot. Janot, for his part, has no idea who the stranger is and must be prompted into recognition by Janette: “C’est ung ange, comme il me semble.” (l. 86, It’s an angel, so it seems to me). Saint Michael—for that is who Loverboy-cum-angel identifies him-

51 This lively anonymous farce, discovered in Fribourg, was originally presented with notes (along with two other farces) by Paul Aebischer as “Farce à cinq personnages,” in *Trois farces françaises inédites trouvées à Fribourg* (Paris, Champion, 1924), 13–19; this edition formed the basis of my English-language translation, produced in 1992, *The Way to Paradise*. For this study, I used a new edited version: *La farce de Janot dans le sac*, ed. Marie-Claire Gerard-Zai and Simone de Reyff (Geneva: Droz, 1990). Their edition makes note that a performance of the original (presumably in French) took place in 1989.

52 The title was assigned by the editors of the recent edition; the original edition by Aebischer (1924) listed it as “Farce à cinq personnages.”

53 The play itself gives no backstory; were I to restage it, I would do a short scene in dumb show.

54 The main characters do not appear to see or hear him; this would appear to follow the staging convention of asides, which continues to this day.

self as—claims he was sent by God to take Janot to heaven, where he will be “glorifié” (l. 92, glorified or in glory). While the wife exults, Janot frets essentially about not being able to bring his carryon: “Laisseroyt je tout que j’ayez?” (l. 96, Must I leave behind all that I have?). The wife takes one whole line to mourn Janot’s departure—“Janot, vous me laysez ci bas?” (l. 99, Johnny, will you leave me here below?)—then, in an abrupt comic turn, dismisses him: “Au moins [mou]lt prieré por moy.” (l. 100, Well, at least you can pray for me). Janot is caught up in narcissistic visions of the images they will make of him, his festival celebrations, his spot on the calendar of saint’s days (ll. 101–08). Almost paradise.

But first he has got to get there. And straight is not the way to the gate: the celestial visitor indicates an open sack into which Janot must crawl. Others have left their bodies behind, Michael allows, but Janot must ascend “En corps et en ame ensemble” (l. 116, body and soul together) into heaven. Janot, still focused on his future status as superstar patron saint, vows that those who honor him will prosper, abounding in sows and piglets (l. 122) and gaining “Troys cens jours au moins de pardon,” (l. 126, at least three hundred days of pardon). Not wanting Janot to ponder overlong on this unconventional mode of transport, Michael urges haste: “Que tu t’avances vitament. / Tous les anges font chantement / De ta venue la hault ès cieulx” (ll. 148–50, Do go quickly, / All the angels are already singing / Your entrance into high heaven). Bidding his wife goodbye, Janot wriggles into the bag, to be angelically toted skyward. “Porte moy en paradis, sans delay!” (l. 179, Carry me into heaven, without delay!) he tells the angel. Up, up, and away ...

Of course, this being farce, there is yet another catch: Michael reveals that he, an angelic being, cannot carry his body: “De ta chair ne me chargeray” (l. 181, I will not bear your flesh), so Janot must be *dragged* to heaven (l. 180). God, it seems, demands that his select followers come to him by suffering torments: “Car Dieu veult qu’on [i] pregne painne” (l. 187, God wills that one goes through pain), especially those who have led “la vie hautainne” (l. 188, a haughty lifestyle).⁵⁵ The angel warns Janot he could have it worse; in the past, some on their way heavenward were “decollez, / Les autres escorchez et bruslez” (ll. 191–92, decapitated, / Others flayed and burned). Soon, Janot will soon have all the joys of heaven following his tribulations, which according to scripture are justified (ll. 196–201), an assertion to which the Fool concurs. And now the physical comedy that makes this farce a jewel of the stage begins in earnest.

⁵⁵ Intended ironically, of course. There is nothing noble, haughty, or even bourgeois about Janot and his piglets.

Janot yells, struggles, breaks wind,⁵⁶ pleading "J'ay desja le cul escorché" (l. 209, my bottom's being skinned off). Michael is serene, urging him to think beyond his *travaux* and upon his salvation (l. 207), including how differently he will feel in Paradise (ll. 216–17). Janot's concerns are considerably more fleshly: "Je n'ay plus [ne] menton ne bouche / Qui ne soyt trestoult despicé! (ll. 220–21, I have no part of chin or mouth that won't soon be torn off). He's also become intimately, distressingly acquainted with a large rock in the path: "Qui dyable a mys cy ce chilliout?" (l. 230, Who the devil put that stone there)—and curses the "Faulx ange" (l. 229, False angel) who stuffed him in the sack and is trying to kill him. Adding insult to injury, Michael now taunts Janot that such is the fate of all suspicious husbands: "Especial quant [sont] jaloux," (l. 238, Especially when [they are] jealous). The Fool's jeers—"He, Janot, Janot, ou es tu? / Es tu en paradis terrestre?" (ll. 280–81 Hey, Johnny, Johnny, where are you? / Are you in an earthly heaven?)⁵⁷ complete the onstage debacle that is anything but celestial. At the end poor battered Janot emerges from the bag, sadder but wiser, and rues having fallen for the nasty trick cooked up by the duplicitous pair: "Que Dieu mette l'ange en malant, / Qui me menoit en paradis!" (ll. 284–85, May God send ills to the angel / Who led me into Paradise!). This play makes it clear: Assumptions about heaven do not necessarily translate into heavenward assumption.

Dying is easy, the adage goes; it's comedy that is hard. But what of comedy that pokes fun at what happens after we have shuffled off this mortal coil? Perhaps this is yet another way of cheating death, pulling a fast one on the loss and the mystery of the beyond by using hellish or heavenly concepts in most humanly self-serving ways. It is worth noting that, after all is said and done, all the characters in these plays end up topside; they have bested their brush with death, if only for the moment. One wonders if the human less-than-saintliness displayed in these plays might make this comedy a subgenre of gallows humor. Hallows humor, anyone?

56 At which the angel utters a mildly unholy oath: "Par Nostre Dame, il a vecy" (l. 195, By Our Lady, he's farted—).

57 Again, even though the Fool addresses Janot, this is evidently a sarcastic aside to the audience.

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Gallows Humor in the *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea*

The connection between humor and death has, at times, been simply dismissed as incongruous and even as sick or cruel.¹ Peter Narváez sees humor as one “technique for communicating and dealing with the enigma of our precarious mortality.”² This critic also contends that the link between humor and death appears to be universal and may be used to alleviate the pain of loss, lessen fear of the unknown, or celebrate life in the face of demise.³ Other scholars, such as James Thorson, speak of gallows humor in which humor is not generated by the odd circumstances of a death but rather is composed deliberately, i.e., humor in the face of death that is “created knowingly and for a purpose.”⁴

While humor and what is considered funny differ across both time and culture,⁵ the universal reality of death is common to all and, ironically, may be treated in less-than serious fashion. Authors relate the death of both fictive and non-fictive persons in a myriad of ways, ranging from elegiac praise to gross debasement. A person’s death may be presented as deserved, due to either the immoral or criminal behavior of the individual, or as tragic, owing to the great loss suffered by the larger community due to his/her passing. But along this spectrum there is room for the comic—either as a coping mechanism or as a defiant gesture when faced with the overwhelming reality of mortality.

Laughing at death constitutes part of what we label black humor. According to Breton’s classic *Anthologie de l’humour noir*, black humor is not a genre of literature but rather “an attitude, a stance, or a perspective which exists independently of literature but which may be embodied in writing. It uses ironic and biting intelligence to attack sentimentality, social convention (including literary

1 Peter Narváez, “Introduction: The Death-Humor Paradox,” *Of Corpse: Death and Humor in Folklore and Popular Culture*, ed. Peter Narváez (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 2003), 1–14; here 5.

2 Narváez, “Introduction” (see note 1), 11.

3 Narváez, “Introduction” (see note 1), 11.

4 James A. Thorson, “Did You Ever See a Hearse Go By? Some Thoughts on Gallows Humor,” *Journal of American Culture* 16.2 (1993): 17–24; here 18.

5 See for example the studies in Albrecht Classen, ed., *Laughter in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times: Epistemology of a Fundamental Human Behavior, its Meaning, and Consequences*. *Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture* 5 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2010).

convention), and an apparently absurd universe.”⁶ Breton was writing in 1939 and scholars in the 1960s subsequently glommed onto the ideas of black humor and black comedy as essential to understanding the writers of their age. To my way of thinking black humor, although garnishing much critical attention in the second half of the twentieth century, is in no way confined to the literary production of that period. Mathew Winston rejects the notion that black humor is similar to tragicomedy, calling the tragicomedy a median phenomenon that “is at odds with black humor’s violent juxtaposition and combination of extremes [of mirth and killing].”⁷ I would beg to differ, as this article will demonstrate. If we examine Fernando de Rojas’s careful selection of tragic-comedy to label his masterpiece, *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea*, we see that his use of this denomination very closely relates to what we contemporarily label black humor.

First, some background on this genre-busting, widely successful Spanish text first published in 1499. The original version of the work bears the title *Comedia de Calisto y Melibea*. Fernando de Rojas, the only named author of the work, claims to have found the first act or chapter already written, and he admired it so much that he decided to continue and complete the text. The anonymous first chapter, although labeled an *Auto* or Act, was not, however, the first act of a play in the strictest sense of the word. The anonymous author used no narrative voice, revealing the plot and motivations of his characters entirely through written dialogue and implied gestures but without any stage directions or other performance indicators. The anonymous author of the first act calls his work a comedy stating that his goal is to warn reckless lovers who put their earthly passions on the same level as their love of God. He also claims to be warning readers about the deceits of go-betweens and the flattery of untrustworthy servants. When Fernando de Rojas finished his 16-act *Comedia*, he included the death of the go-between Celestina at the murderous hands of Calisto’s greedy servants who are executed for their crime, as well as the death of Calisto and the subsequent suicide of Melibea. The deaths of five of the work’s major characters provoked complaints among Rojas’s readers who expressed dismay that such a death-centered work should bear the title of *Comedia*. In response Rojas decided to pen a second, longer version of his work prolonging the sexual escapades of the two protagonists and giving it the new hybrid title of *Tragicomedia*. Rojas tells us about readers’ reactions and his responses to them in a new prologue

6 Mathew Winston, “*Humour noir* and Black Humor,” *Veins of Humor*. Harvard English Studies, 3 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), 269–84; here 270.

7 Winston, “*Humour noir*” (see note 6), 274.

that became part of the first and all subsequent editions of the new, 21-act *Tragicomedia*. Jeremy Lawrence has admirably demonstrated that Fernando de Rojas, as a student in the late fifteenth century at the University of Salamanca, would have known and studied Donatus's commentaries on the plays of Terence. According to Donatus, "comedy concerns fictional stories about mediocre characters with trivial or happy endings, while tragedy concerns true stories about high characters with serious or grave endings."⁸ Donatus adds that, when Terence includes a death in a comedy, the death should not be considered serious since the character removed is "a whore, or a dotard, or a surplus wife, so that a death of this kind is viewed with mild sorrow or even amusement."⁹ But, as Lawrence observes, "the shambles of death and destruction"¹⁰ which ends Rojas's *Tragicomedia*, could not be swept under the rug easily in accordance with Donatus's principles since not only do the lower-born characters (Calisto's servants and the go-between) die violently but the aristocratic protagonists also meet ignominious ends. The second, longer version of the work soon became the norm, a sixteenth-century best seller, and no other versions of the shorter *Comedia* appeared. Rojas's justification for his new title, *Tragicomedia*,¹¹ was accepted and seems more or less accurate since the new version deals with high-born characters as well as lower-caste ones, many of whom meet tragic ends but, also behave in comic ways, even at the hour of death.

The basic plot of the *Tragicomedia* is really quite simple. A nobleman, Calisto, is smitten with love for Melibea, an equally noble-born young woman. On the advice of one of his servants, he enlists the help of a go-between named Celestina to help him woo the young lady.¹² Celestina is the most colorful character

8 Jeremy Lawrence, "On the Title *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea*," *Letters and Society in Fifteenth-Century Spain: Studies Presented to P.E. Russell on his Eightieth Birthday*, ed. Alan Deyermann and Jeremy Lawrence (Oxford: Dolphin Books, 1993), 79–92; here 85.

9 Lawrence "On the Title" (see note 8), 86.

10 Lawrence, "On the Title" (see note 8), 86.

11 All quotes are from Fernando de Rojas, *La Celestina*, ed. Dorothy S. Severin. 3rd ed. Letras Hispánicas 4 (Madrid: Cátedra, 1989): "El primer autor quiso darle denominación del principio, que fue placer, y llamóla comedia. Yo viendo estas discordias, entre estos estemos partí agora por media la porfía y llaméla tragicomedia." (here 81) ("The first author wanted to call it the first [i.e. comedy] because it was designed for pleasure and so called it comedy. Seeing the discord, between the two extremes I decided on a middle ground and called it tragic-comedy.") All English translations are my own.

12 For a good review of critics' opinions about why Calisto and Melibea do not pursue honorable matrimony instead of an illicit affair see Enrique Baltanás, "El matrimonio imposible de Calisto y Melibea (notas a un engima)," *Lemir: Revista Electrónica sobre Literatura Española Medieval y del Renacimiento* 5 (2001): no pagination.

in the work, a well-rounded personality who is much more than a stock representation of the old woman procuress. In fact, Rojas's finally wrought vision for this character soon led the reading public to refer to the book simply as *La Celestina*, the title that all editions of the *Tragicomedia* published after 1569 would bear as part of the frontispiece.¹³ Calisto lavishly rewards Celestina for her services but, when she refuses to share her bounty with Calisto's servants, Sempronio and Pármeneo, they kill her in a fit of rage. They try to escape by jumping from a window and almost kill themselves in the process. They are quickly apprehended and executed publically in the city square. Before Celestina's death, she had arranged for Calisto and Melibea to meet and they soon begin a clandestine affair, meeting under cover of dark in the walled garden of Melibea's home. The deaths of Celestina and the servants do not deter the young lovers who continue to meet until one fateful night when Calisto falls to his death while descending the walls surrounding Melibea's garden. Melibea, in response, throws herself from a high tower of her home in the presence of her distressed father. The work ends with Melibea's father railing against life, love, and fate as his only child and heir lies dead before him.

Lawrence labels the work a "burlesque tragedy" and "a black comedy."¹⁴ He further declares that the *Tragicomedia*, far from being a tragedy interspersed with moments of comic relief, is actually a fusion of the tragic and the comic without any resolution. Lawrence asserts that "An uneasy (but expertly controlled) mixture of farce, slapstick, burlesque, and horror is constantly at work."¹⁵ We might also classify what Rojas accomplishes in the *Tragicomedia* as an example of what James Thorson labels "gallows humor." Thorson claims that "gallows humor" does not arise from "situations ... that involve ordinary people caught up in humorous circumstances that in some way lead to death. Genuine gallows humor is...intentional (not circumstantial) and ... generated for a reason."¹⁶ Certainly, I believe that Rojas's treatment of death is intentional and purposeful but it is not necessarily a coping mechanism as Thorson further contends about other instances of "gallows humor."¹⁷ For Rojas, injecting humor into death is part of his artistic arsenal designed to keep the reader continuously disarmed. While one is prepared for a tale of an illicit affair that ends badly, we are totally unprepared for comic injections into the numerous death scenes. On this

13 On this point, see Steven Kirby, "¿Cuándo empezó a conocerse la obra de Fernando de Rojas como 'Celestina'?" *Celestinesca* 13.1 (1989): 59–62.

14 Lawrence, "On the Title" (see note 8), 87.

15 Lawrence, "On the Title" (see note 8), 89.

16 Thorson, "Did you Ever See a Hearse Go By?" (see note 4), 17–18.

17 Thorson, "Did you Ever See a Hearse Go By?" (see note 4), 18.

point, Lawrence asserts that Rojas carries “the comic tone and diction right into the heart of darkness....”¹⁸

In the remainder of this article, I will focus on the deaths of five main characters in the *Tragicomedia* and note how each unsettles any sort of binary categorization as purely tragic or purely comic; they confuse any pre-conceived notion of how we as readers should react to their demise either because of extenuating circumstances surrounding the death or the commentary on them made by other characters. Recall that there is no narrative voice in the *Tragicomedia* and all the information we possess is filtered through the dialogue and monologues of the characters.

Ironically, the first death to occur is that of Celestina, as I have noted, the most colorful and memorable character in the work. The fact that she dies mid-plot attests to the vitality of her presence in the lives of the other characters. Even after she is no longer physically present to manipulate or influence events or persons, the forces she has put in motion grind on to their horrific ends. After a long night, standing watch while Calisto visits Melibea, Calisto’s servants are tired and fed-up with their master’s oblivion to anything but his romantic adventure. At dawn, they decide to go to Celestina’s house and demand for themselves part of the wealth Calisto had lavished on the go-between. The two servants take at face value Celestina’s earlier promise to share with them any rewards or gifts that Calisto gave her for services in return for the servants’ cooperation and help. By this point in the plot, readers are keenly aware that Celestina is greedy, an experienced and expert liar, and a deceiver par excellence, so we are not surprised when she is unwilling to share anything she has received with Sempronio and Pármeno. The servants, too, know Celestina well and are fully aware of her character flaws, so it is surprising that they expect her suddenly to become magnanimous with them. Or perhaps they don’t expect her to share—conscious or subconscious knowledge they will then use to justify their violent actions toward Celestina. In this scene, Celestina totally miscalculates the level of frustration, rage, and bitterness the servants feel. Up to this point, Celestina has read perfectly the motives, weaknesses, and desires of those around her. She has convinced Melibea of the rightness of receiving Calisto as her lover, against all moral and societal proscriptions to the contrary. She has played Calisto like a fiddle, gaining for herself impressive sums of money and jewelry even before she engineers his secret meetings with Melibea. And she secured the reluctant assistance of Pármeno, the servant who originally opposed Calisto’s association with the go-between, by procuring him the sexual favors of a young woman the servant

18 Lawrence, “On the Title” (see note 8), 90.

had been admiring. But now, when the stakes are at their highest and Celestina is threatened by imminent death, her powers of perception and persuasion utterly fail her. She is reduced to telling obvious lies—for example, that someone had broken in and stolen a valuable necklace Calisto had given her—and promising to serve up ten willing wenches for the servants if they desist in their demands to share in her compensation. At this point, the older of the two servants, Sempronio, accuses Celestina of making jokes (*burlas*) at their expense. He spits out a colorful host of refrains, adding to the burlesque tone of the moment: “Yo dígole que se vaya y abáxasse las bragas”¹⁹ (literally, “I’m telling you to get out of here and pull down your panties”)—an old Spanish saying used when someone does the opposite of what has been requested. He follows this comical refrain with another: “con esse galgo no tomarás...más liebres”²⁰ (“with that greyhound you won’t catch many rabbits”), meaning that she won’t gain anything by telling them tall tales. It is significant to note here that these two comically ironic refrains were one of the additions Rojas made when he penned the longer version of the *Tragicomedia*.

I am not the first critic to point out that many of the changes made by Rojas in his second version accentuate the comic and burlesque elements of the plot.²¹ Sempronio continues in this same vein with another punchy metaphor, this one original to the first version: “A perro viejo no cuz cuz”²² (“An old dog won’t respond to ‘here, here’”) which means that a person with experience cannot be easily deceived by sweet words. Celestina reacts with a swift, verbal attack on the two servants, scolding them for threatening her and asserting that she makes an honest living by honest work—the irony of this assertion is not lost on the reader who has come to know Celestina as a procuress, repairer of lost maidenheads, and a sorcerer who even conjures the devil to help her in her enterprises. Her honest work is far from honest and all know it. Celestina commits the final, fatal verbal faux pas in this confrontation when she reminds Pármeno of his mother’s sordid past. Celestina had been a friend and cohort of Pármeno’s deceased mother who, as we have learned from past conversations between the young servant and the go-between, was just as much a *puta vieja* (old whore) as Celestina.

At the mention of his mother and her less than honorable history, Pármeno blurts out his own colorful saying: “¡No me hinchas las narizes con essas memo-

¹⁹ Rojas, *La Celestina* (see note 11), 272.

²⁰ Rojas, *La Celestina* (see note 11), 272–73.

²¹ See, for example, Lawrence, “On the Title” (see note 8), especially page 87.

²² Rojas, *La Celestina* (see note 11), 273.

rias ...!”²³ (“Don’t swell up my nostrils with that memory!” or, in other words, “Don’t get my ire up.”) And he threatens to send Celestina to keep company with his mother, one assumes, in hell. At last, now seeing the desperation of her situation, Celestina calls out to the young prostitute, Elicia, who shares her house, telling her to get out of bed and come to her aid. Peter Russell points out that, previously, there was an allusion to Elicia sleeping in the same room with Celestina. If this is the case, the fact that the young prostitute has been sleeping throughout the loud altercation between Celestina and the servants adds to the comic effect and makes the whole situation of Celestina’s impending doom even more ridiculous.²⁴ The last words of Sempronio before he plunges his sword into Celestina is a guarantee to send her straight to the devil with “cartas” that will insure her immediate entrance into hell: “yo te haré yr al infierno con cartas” (“I’ll send you to hell with letters of recommendation”).²⁵ He brutally attacks Celestina as Pármeno eggs him on. The go-between calls out for confession but she dies, dispatched to her fate without even the solace of the Church.²⁶ The two servants, in a panic after the murder, nearly kill themselves jumping from the window of Celestina’s home in an effort to escape justice. Thus, Act XII ends with these scenes of carnage. The irony of Sempronio and Parmeno falling was foreshadowed by their earlier, ironic quoting of a *sentitia* from Seneca: “quien con modo torpe sube en alto, más presto cae que sube”²⁷ (“he who clumsily climbs upward, more rapidly will fall than climb.”)²⁸ It is worth noting that part of the general humor running throughout the *Tragicomedia* is a tendency to put learned quotes into the mouths of the lower-caste characters whereas the aristocratic characters can, and do, lapse into crude speech.²⁹

²³ Rojas, *La Celestina* (see note 11), 273.

²⁴ Rojas, *Comedia o Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea*, ed. Peter E. Russell. Clásicos Castalia 191 (Madrid: Castalia, 1991), 483, fn. 117.

²⁵ Rojas, *La Celestina* (see note 11), 274.

²⁶ For the good study on the parody of religion in the *Tragicomedia*, see Laura Puerto, “*La Celestina*, ¿una obra para la postmodernidad? Parodia religiosa, humor, ‘nihilismo,’” *Celestinesca* 32 (2008): 245–63.

²⁷ Rojas, *La Celestina* (see note 11), 174.

²⁸ Louise Fothergill-Payne, “*Celestina* ‘As a Funny Book’: A Bakhtinian Reading,” *Celestinesca* 17.2 (1993): 29–51; here 40. Quoted by the servants in Acts I and V. These and other similar statements about falling prefigure all of the deaths except that of Celestina.

²⁹ Fothergill-Payne, “*Celestina* ‘As a Funny Book’” (see note 28), remarks that the authors of the *Tragicomedia* were poking fun at the pseudo-knowledge of the fifteenth century when handbooks of maxims and saying of Petrarch and Seneca were part of the university curriculum. She observes that “the nouveau-riche of learning comes to be an ideal target for parody with his or her excessive quoting (and misquoting) of *auctoritates*, *non-sequitur* in discourse, and ill-remembered maxims, which cause those in the know to exchange a conspiratorial wink” (42).

In the following act, another of Calisto's servants relates to his master the fate that has befallen Sempronio and Pármeno. He has just witnessed in the town square the summary execution of the two assassins who had been apprehended almost immediately after jumping out of Celestina's window. He describes the terrible physical state of the two men as a result of their fall—one had cracked open his head and his brains were spilt on the pavement and the other suffered two broken arms and multiple bruises—and tells his master that they were barely conscious when they were publically beheaded.

Significantly, these graphic details also form part of the materials added to the *Tragicomedia*, evidence that further supports the notion that Rojas's refined his sense of black humor when composing the new version of his work. The fact that the two servants who killed Celestina probably would have died from their injuries, makes their dramatic execution particularly ironic. Adding to the absurdity is the fact that they were beheaded—a form of execution in Rojas's time reserved for members of the aristocracy. Russell claims that this inappropriate form of execution would have left Rojas's first readers perplexed and flabbergasted since servants normally would have been hanged rather than beheaded.³⁰ A number of critics have commented on the world turned upside down that Rojas presents in the *Tragicomedia* and this would seem but another detail about these deaths that would have been jarring and unsettling. Why publically execute a pair of low-lives who are already on the point of death? Perhaps to show that justice in such matters is swift and certain, or does it merely add to the spectacle? These executions are good examples of what Wolfgang Kayser calls the grotesquely comic³¹—half-dead and mangled bodies being submitted to needless beheading.

We now turn to the death of Calisto that occurs in Act XIX. Just as Celestina's death followed on her verbal missteps and an exaggerated sense of her own powers to dissuade her attackers, Calisto's death "is preceded by a comically inopportune piece of bravado."³² It also follows a pair of somewhat bizarre verbal and physical exchanges that occur in the garden among Calisto, Melibea, and Melibea's serving maid, Lucrecia.

As Calisto is about to climb the ladder to scale the garden walls, he overhears Lucrecia and Melibea singing. The song belongs to the tradition of the *cantigas de amigo*³³ and makes direct references to Calisto and Melibea by name

30 Rojas, *Comedia o Tragicomedia* (see note 24), 490, fn. 10.

31 Wolfgang Kayser, *The Grottesque in Art and Literature*, trans. Ulrich Weisstein (1957; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1963), 173.

32 Lawrence, "On the Title" (see note 8), 91.

33 Russell, *Comedia o Tragicomedia* (see note 24), 566, fn. 24.

while celebrating their affair. Far from the affair being a well-kept secret,³⁴ the irony here is that, with the public execution of Pármene and Sempronio and the revelation of their involvement with Celestina, the affair would seem to be common knowledge, so much so that songs are being composed about it.³⁵ One stanza is worth noting. Lucrecia sings:

Saltos de gozo infinitos
da el lobo viendo ganado;
con las tetas, los cabritos;
Melibea con su amado.³⁶

[Infinite jumps for joy
the wolf gives upon spying cattle;
just like little goats for their mother's teats;
Melibea for her lover.]

As John Rutherford points out the comparisons with animals that the song establishes to describe Melibea's lustful desires parody conventional love lyrics.³⁷ He further asserts that "Animal lust is meant to characterize only the lower orders and is, therefore, like cowardice inherently funny, particularly if it takes place between those who claim to be highborn, and with the eager participation of a servant girl."³⁸ Moreover, since only prostitutes were supposed to lust after men, Melibea's desire to join in with Lucrecia's singing after she hears these verses enforces the lasciviousness and the humor of the scene that follows.

When Calisto enters the garden, Lucrecia is overcome by the sexual tension in the air and begins to fondle Calisto as she removes his armor. While it would

³⁴ Many critics have commented on the *Tragicomedia* as a parody of courtly love literature and Calisto and Melibea as parodies of courtly lovers. See, for example, the classic studies by June Hall Martin, *Love's Fools: Aucassin, Troilus, Calisto and the Parody of the Courtly Lover* (London: Tamesis, 1972) and María Rosa Lida de Malkiel, *La originalidad artística de La Celestina* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Universitaria de Buenos Aires, 1962). See also Alan D. Deyermond, "The Text-Book Mishandled: Andrea Capellanus and the Opening Scene of *La Celestina*," *Neophilologus* 45 (1961): 218–21; and Dorothy Severin, "La parodia del amor cortés en *La Celestina*," *Congreso Edad de Oro* (Madrid: Universidad Autónoma, 1983): III, 275–79.

³⁵ This fact alone makes it even more absurd that Melibea's parents do not suspect their daughter or perhaps indicates that they are purposefully turning a blind eye to it, hoping to soon marry off their daughter as per their conversation in Act XVI.

³⁶ Rojas, *La Celestina* (see note 11), 321.

³⁷ John Rutherford, "Laughing at Death: Act XIX of the *Tragedia de Calisto y Melibea*," *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* 78 (2001): 167–76; here 172.

³⁸ Rutherford, "Laughing at Death" (see note 37), 172.

have been part of the maid's duty to help Calisto to take off his armor,³⁹ we realize that she has gone a step further when Melibea reprimands her:

Lucrecia, ¿qué sientes, amiga? ¿Tórnaste loca de placer? Déxamele, no me le despedaces, no le trabajes sus miembros con tus pesados abraços; déxame gozar lo que es mío; no me ocupes mi placer.⁴⁰

[Lucrecia, what are you doing? Have you gone crazy with pleasure? Leave him to me, don't pull him apart, don't fondle him with your annoying embraces. Let me enjoy what is mine; don't get in the way of my pleasure.]

This somewhat scandalous and bawdy scene is another addition to the *Tragicomedia*, as is almost all of Act XIX. It is nearly as if Rojas is painting a slapstick scene that he will shortly juxtapose with the very non-heroic death of the protagonist who, that very evening, will plummet to his death from the heights of the walls surrounding Melibea's garden. The humorous, rather than erotic, nature of the couple's meeting in the garden continues as Melibea protests that Calisto is ripping at her clothes and being too rough with her:

Holguemos y burlemos de otros mill modos que yo te mostraré; no me destroces ni maltrates como sueles. ¿Qué provecho te trae dañar mis vestiduras?⁴¹

[Let's take our pleasure and enjoy ourselves a thousand other ways that I will show you; don't manhandle and mistreat me like you usually do. What good will come from destroying my clothes?]

To which our romantic lead replies brazenly, "Señora, el que quiere comer el ave, quita primero las plumas"⁴² ("My lady, he who wants to eat the bird must first pluck its feathers").⁴³ And, while the two make love, Lucrecia, the maid, overhears it all, making lewd comments about her own frustrated sexual desires and alluding to the fact that they seemed to have made love three times—"a tres me parece que va la vencida"⁴⁴ ("It seems that she's been taken three times"). Rutherford observes that Lucrecia's comment implies that Calisto has

³⁹ Russell, *Comedia o Tragicomedia* (see note 24), 570, fn. 42.

⁴⁰ Rojas, *La Celestina* (see note 11), 323.

⁴¹ Rojas, *La Celestina* (see note 11), 323–24.

⁴² Rojas, *La Celestina* (see note 11), 324.

⁴³ Russell, *Comedia o Tragicomedia* (see note 24) labels this remark "grosero" (crude or vulgar) and comic since it lays bare the flagrantly sexual nature of the lovers' relationship, no matter how much they have veiled it behind the rhetoric of courtly love (571–72, fn. 46).

⁴⁴ Rojas, *La Celestina* (see note 11), 324.

reached orgasm quickly,⁴⁵ and Russell notes the phrase's ambiguity since it may mean making love three times or simply that it took Calisto three times to get it right.⁴⁶

Calisto, up to this point in the *Tragicomedia*, has proven himself to be obsessed with fulfilling his own desires, oblivious to the consequences of his actions or the needs of others. So, it is classically ironic that the one time that he seems to express concern for another is precisely the action that will precipitate his fall and death. When he hears what appears to be yelling and altercation from his servants in the street, he assumes they are being attacked and rushes to their aid, refusing to even take time to put on his armor. As he is about to descend, one of the servants yells to him that they are in no harm and that the noise was just some ruffians making a commotion. Melibea tries to persuade Calisto to put on his armor before descending but he refuses and, as he steps onto the ladder, she tells Lucrecia to help her throw Calisto's armor over the wall to him below. Rutherford, going against the grain of most critics who see Calisto's subsequent fall from the ladder as an accidental slip, claims that when Lucrecia and Melibea throw Calisto's armor over the wall it may have hit him and caused him to fall. He points out that the two women do not actually see the accident but only hear it. Furthermore, Rutherford claims that the very idea of throwing Calisto's armor after him is absurd "as if those cutthroats on the other side [of the wall] were going to stand there twiddling their fingers and making polite conversation while Sosia and Tristán strap it on to their master prior to the fight.... Melibea's concern is not Calisto's safety but her need to get rid of the evidence of a man's presence in the garden, at all costs and as quickly as possible."⁴⁷ This is an intriguing idea and adds a particularly acerbic element to the black humor in the *Tragicomedia*. The idea that Calisto is inadvertently knocked off the ladder by Melibea's haste to be rid of his armor is pure black comedy at its darkest and most shocking. Rojas piles more humor into the scene by including the hapless remarks the servants make as their master lies broken before them on the cobblestones. Sosia remarks "Tan muerto es como mi abuelo"⁴⁸ ("He's as dead as my grandfather"). And the other servant, Tristán, briefly bemoans his master's fate and then gets down to the practicalities of cleaning up the mess: "Coge, Sosia, esos sesos de esos cantos; júntalos con la cabeça del desdichado amo nuestro"⁴⁹ ("Pick up, Sosia, those brains from the paving stones; put them

45 Rutherford, "Laughing at Death" (see note 37), 172.

46 Russell, *Comedia o Tragicomedia* (see note 24), 572, fn. 49.

47 Rutherford, "Laughing at Death" (see note 37), 174.

48 Rojas, *La Celestina* (see note 11), 327.

49 Rojas, *La Celestina* (see note 11), 327.

back in the skull of our unfortunate master”). Fothergill-Payne points out that Tristán’s remark is related to metaphoric uses in Spanish of *seso*. She observes that “‘Perder el seso’ (‘lose one’s brain/mind’), ‘estar en’ or ‘fuera de seso’ (‘to be in or out of one’s brain/mind’) are frequently used metaphors to denote a state of mind which is then brought down to a ‘state of the body,’”⁵⁰ thus producing a comic reaction.⁵¹

In the following act, Melibea will commit suicide, throwing herself from a tall tower while her incredulous father watches from below, unable to prevent her death. She makes a long, impassioned speech prior to her death and this monologue makes up almost all of Act XX. In it she confesses her affair with Calisto, their clandestine meetings in her parents’ garden, and Calisto’s untimely death. She also makes an attempt to justify her suicide by giving a long litany of famous people who had inflicted pain on members of their families.⁵² Fothergill-Payne calls this long speech “verbal affectation” and comments that this pedantic aside would have seemed laughably ridiculous to readers and listeners of the *Tragicomedia*. She states that “Readers and listeners should by now be in stitches, but curiously enough, critics anticipating Melibea’s imminent suicide and mindful of her poor father who has helplessly to endure her long speech before witnessing his only daughter fall to her death, have not been able to spot how ridiculous her speech nor situation are.”⁵³ The insertion of this long list into Melibea’s speech appears to be yet another instance of Rojas poking fun at unnecessary and inappropriate flourishes of language. Melibea’s suicide can also be related to another incident in the *Tragicomedia*. When Celestina first approached Melibea to persuade her to accept Calisto as her lover, she initially says that Calisto is suffering from a terrible toothache, a metaphor for sexual longing. She asked Melibea for a sash that had supposedly touched relics and a prayer to Saint Apollonia, the patron saint of those suffering from toothaches. Andrew Beresford sees this allusion to Apollonia not only as a thinly-veiled allusion to Calisto’s sexual interest in Melibea, but also a prefiguration of Melibea’s suicide. Apollonia also committed suicide, throwing herself into a fire to escape her tor-

50 Fothergill-Payne, “*Celestina* ‘As a Funny Book’” (see note 28), 40.

51 On the metaphor of “falta de sesos” see also Rebeca Sanmartín Bastida, “Sobre el teatro de la muerte en *La Celestina*: El cuerpo ‘hecho pedazos’ y la ambigüedad macabra,” *eHumanista* 5 (2005): 113–25; here 118.

52 Significantly, this entire litany is an addition, not found in the original *Comedia*.

53 Fothergill-Payne, “*Celestina* ‘As a Funny Book’” (see note 28), 43.

mentors and, also like Melibea, she dies unconfessed.⁵⁴ So it would seem that Apollonia, ironically, rather than being held up as exemplary model of Christian martyr is invoked, ironically, as a model for suicide. Apollonia suffering when her teeth are pulled is metaphorically tied to Melibea's loss of sexual partner after Calisto's death.⁵⁵

The last act, Act XXI, is made up almost entirely of the lament pronounced by Melibea's father, Pleberio, over his dead daughter's body. Pleberio, not unlike his daughter in the previous act, will intone a long and somewhat laborious speech but it is his first reactions to his daughter's fractured body that introduce a touch of black humor into what should be an utterly pitiable scene. As Melibea's mother rushes in to see what all the commotion is about, Pleberio describes the tragedy with a popular refrain: "¡... nuestro gozo en el pozo ...!"⁵⁶ ("...all our joy has gone down the tubes!"). Critics are divided on the inclusion of this phrase. Severin sees it as a parallel to the type of indecorous remarks that Calisto's servants make when they are confronted with the death of their master⁵⁷ but Russell states that readers in Rojas's time would have taken "pozo" in the sense of "sepulcro" [grave]. Russell argues that a public schooled in Latin would have recognized medieval Latin *puteus*, with the meaning of "grave" together with the rhetorical figure of *similiter cadens* in the rhyme of -ozo, -ozo.⁵⁸ In light of the other cases of Rojas's inserting a comic element into scenes of death, I side with Severin and, since Rojas wrote in a very accessible vernacular, I do not believe all his readers would have made the Latinate connections that Russell argues for. And Pleberio's speech itself is merely a long, repetitive diatribe against the injustices of love, fate, and the world at large.

Fothergill-Payne describes Pleberio here as an automaton and relates his puppet-like performance to Bergson's ideas about the rigidity of performance as one of the elements of the comic.⁵⁹ Pleberio pronounces a *planctus* but it is a bad imitation of his models and, as Deyermond has pointed out, most of Pleberio's remarks dwell on the loss of his daughter in economic rather than spiritual terms. He is more concerned about the material impact of the death of his

54 Andrew M. Beresford, "'Una oración, señora que le dixerón que sabías, de Sancta Polonia para el dolor de las muelas': *Celestina* and the Legend of St Apollonia," *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* 78 (2001): 39–57; here 55–56.

55 Toothache was a socially acceptable metaphor for sexual desire. See Beresford, "'Una oración" (see note 54), 51.

56 Rojas, *La Celestina* (see note 11), 336.

57 Rojas, *La Celestina* (see note 11), 336, fn. 4.

58 Rojas, *Comedia o Tragicomedia* (see note 24), 594, fn. 6.

59 Fothergill-Payne, "*Celestina* 'As a Funny Book'" (see note 28), 45.

only heir than expressing any concern about the fate of her soul. Deyermond concludes that “Rojas holds him [Pleberio] up for our censure; probably for our understanding and sympathy, but certainly for our condemnation.”⁶⁰ While I agree that we, as readers, feel sympathy for Pleberio, the note of self-centeredness in his speech detracts from the seriousness of the situation and shows him to be somewhat ridiculous even in this moment of profoundest grief.⁶¹ Fothergill-Payne speculates that Rojas’s original audience—probably his fellow students at the University of Salamanca—would have noticed the flaws in the Pleberio’s *planctus* and seen it as a parody of such pronouncement in the sentimental romance.⁶² Thus, even the expression of grief at the death of a child takes on parodic and even humorous possibilities in the *Tragicomedia*.⁶³

Now that the mutilated bodies of Melibea and Calisto have been literally splayed out before us, we are confronted with what Winston labels the grotesque form of black humor. He defines grotesque black humor as “obsessed with the human body, with the ways in which it can be distorted, separated into its component parts, mutilated, and abused.”⁶⁴ Melibea’s and Calisto’s bodies are smashed upon impact, and the bodies of the servants Pármeno and Sempronio, although not killed by their falls, are also mutilated and disfigured. And their swift executions complete the grotesque picture when their heads literally are separated from their bodies. Celestina’s body, too, is deformed and abused as the servants hack her to death with their swords. In fact, when a servant of Calisto brings him the news of Celestina’s murder, he tells his master that he had personally seen the body of the go-between, remarking that it had received “más de treynta stocadas”⁶⁵ (“more than thirty stab wounds”). In the *Tragicomedia* death is reduced to a corpse and, as Winston reminds us, this is the prime

60 Alan Deyermond, “Pleberio’s Lost Investment: The Wordly Perspective of *Celestina*, Act 21,” *Modern Language Notes* 105.2 (1990): 169–79; here 176.

61 For more on this point, see my article “Speaking of *Celestina*: Soliloquy and Monologue in the *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea*,” *Celestinesca* 36 (2012): 209–36, especially pages 231–32.

62 Fothergill-Payne, “*Celestina* ‘As a Funny Book’” (see note 28), 48.

63 Fothergill-Payne, “*Celestina* ‘As a Funny Book’” (see note 28), 47: concludes that “one could extend the parody in Pleberio’s lament to the whole of the *Tragicomedia*, where the cult of courtly chastity and suffering is juxtaposed with a grotesque realism that emphasizes sex and pure joy in the body.”

64 Winston, “*Humour Noir*” (see note 6), 282.

65 Rojas, *La Celestina* (see note 11), 280.

example of the human body becoming thing, one of the primary motives behind laughter as per the Bergsonian model.⁶⁶

So is death funny in the *Tragicomedia* or is the treatment of death merely consistent with Rojas's parodic treatment of other literary motifs? Rojas presents death in a humorous and even grotesque manner that destabilizes reactions such as grief or distress that most commonly accompany violent or accidental death, even the deaths of fictional characters. The comic notes Rojas introduces into the deaths of every major character in the *Tragicomedia* argue for a consistently parodic undermining of the literary traditions of courtly love and sentimental romance.⁶⁷ But the type of almost perverted humor that he includes, in my opinion, goes beyond simple parody and enters the realms of gallows or black humor. The predominance in the plot of violent death, accidental death, and suicide could also be interpreted as a kind of warning. Sanmartín Bastida claims that the exposition of broken bodies in the *Tragicomedia* had a dissuasive impact on its audience and reminded them that unbridled passion or physical pleasure brought about retribution.⁶⁸ While I do not argue for a purely didactic or moralistic interpretation of the *Tragicomedia* it is undeniable that the deaths of Celestina, Sempronio, Pármeneo, Calisto, and Melibea are prefigured throughout the work and the tragic end is, to an extent, preordained. But, at the same time, I agree with Lawrence who asserts that "the deaths in Rojas's play contravene every rule of decorum, and are supposed to shock, even though they are wholly predictable."⁶⁹ In this sense, then, Rojas moves beyond mere satire in which readers' sense of social norms are contrasted with the mad world depicted by the author.⁷⁰ Especially in the depiction of death, Rojas crosses over into the world of black humor. He does not ask his readers to see the deaths of the major characters as deserved but rather challenges us to question the very standards we use to judge retribution, be it secular or divine. For the black humorist, moral and immoral are not stable or even relevant concerns. For Rojas, death dominates but "it occurs in a ridiculous manner and is never dignified."⁷¹ We laugh at what would normally horrify us and end up suspended somewhere be-

⁶⁶ Winston, "Humour Noir" (see note 6), 283. Winston states "... *rigor mortis* is the *reduction ad absurdum* of Bergsonian automatism" (283).

⁶⁷ Forthergill-Payne, "*Celestina* 'As a Funny Book'" (see note 28), 40 asserts: "The bringing down of all that is held in high esteem to a corporal and concrete level is apparent in every turn of phrase in the Celestinesque discourse."

⁶⁸ Sanmartín Bastida, "Sobre el teatro de la muerte" (see note 51), 122.

⁶⁹ Lawrence, "On the Title" (see note 8), 90.

⁷⁰ Winston, "Humour noir," (see note 6), 274.

⁷¹ Winston, "Humour noir," (see note 6), 283.

tween feelings of mirth and dismay.⁷² The world of the *Tragicomedia* is precisely defined as its title suggests—it is where the tragedy of death is accompanied by a sly smirk and even a giggle or two.

72 Winston, “*Humour noir*,” (see note 6), 284.

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Late Medieval Carved Cadaver Memorials in England and Wales

In this article I will examine and contextualize the late medieval carved cadaver memorials extant in England and Wales. Carved cadaver memorials were a specific form of *gisant* or recumbent *transi* (meaning “passed over”) sculpture produced during the late medieval period in Northern Europe. Late medieval memorials featuring cadavers came in several forms, including two-dimensional incised slabs and brasses, and three-dimensional sculptures, the carved cadavers. Cohen, in her seminal work on late medieval *transi* tombs,¹ suggests there are approximately 200 extant memorials featuring cadavers in Europe, but according to King, there are 154 in Great Britain alone.² There is still much work to be done on *transi* tombs, both in regard to recording their number, and in relation to their geographical context.

My own fieldwork, which focuses purely on the three-dimensional carved cadaver sculptures in Britain, has located 41 extant in England and Wales; none exist in Scotland.³ The 41 carved cadavers I have located include several that do appear in Cohen’s list of *transi* (which does not include any in Wales), and also some missing from King’s works on cadaver tombs. My full list of the sculpted English and Welsh carved cadaver memorials is included at the end of this article; it is arranged alphabetically by location.

The English and Welsh carved cadaver memorials were, even for their time, an unusual form of post-mortem memorial; for they imaged a wealthy individual, naked and emaciated, lying in a burial shroud that covered nothing more than their modesty. Typically they were carved from a single piece of stone, although two of the extant English examples were carved from wood (most likely laminated pieces from the same tree trunk to alleviate splitting⁴). Hugely expen-

1 Kathleen Cohen, *Metamorphosis of a Death Symbol: The Transi Tomb in the Late Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Berkeley, CA: California University Press, 1973).

2 Pamela, King, “The Cadaver Tomb in England; novel manifestation of an old idea,” *Church Monuments* 5 (1990): 26–38; here 27.

3 I would like to thank The University of Winchester, The Henry Moore Foundation, and Church Archaeology, for funding aspects of my research.

4 I would like to thank anatomical sculptor, Eleanor Crook, for her on-going expertise on matters sculptural and anatomical. Rich notes that there are Renaissance and earlier examples of extant wooden works that are laminated, but given this is a hugely under-researched area of study largely due to the relative scarcity of examples. See, Jack C. Rich, *Sculpture in Wood*

sive to commission and taking at least three months to carve,⁵ they all represented members of the high clergy or wealthy landowners and merchants; notably only one is of a female, Alice de la Pole, Duchess of Suffolk (d. 1475). Isabel le Despender, Countess of Worcester (d. 1439), described in her will the carved cadaver she wished to memorialize her, but it was never sculpted.⁶

Several carved cadavers extant in England are known to have been commissioned by the memorialized individuals during their lifetime. Archbishop Henry Chichele (d. 1443) at Canterbury Cathedral; John Baret (d. 1467) at St. Mary's Church, Bury St. Edmunds; Richard Willoughby (d. 1471) at St. Leonard's Church, Wollaton; Alice de la Pole (d. 1475) at the Church of St. Mary the Virgin, Ewelme; Bishop Richard Fox (d. 1528) at Winchester Cathedral; and Precentor Thomas Bennet (d. 1558) at Salisbury Cathedral, would all have spent time gazing on the sculpted anorexic forms that immortalized them at death.

Religiously carved cadavers accorded with Roman Catholic beliefs in the afterlife, acting as a *memento mori* to remind people of their own mortality, and, as I have argued elsewhere, to pray for the sculpted departed in purgatory.⁷ As can be seen from Hiram Kümper's article on this topic in the new *Handbook of Medieval Culture*,⁸ these sculptures straddle Ariès's *mort apprivoisée* (tame or domesticated death) and his *mort de soi* (one's own death, literally death of the self) categories; the former due to their call for prayers from the living community for the departed, and the latter in terms of the individualized memorial itself.

(New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 41. Saul however does not mention lamination in his exploration of wooden effigies in medieval England (see note 5), 73.

5 A conversation with Tim Crawley, master sculptor from the City and Guilds of London Arts School, confirmed that carved cadavers would take around three months to carve given the complexity of the work (on November 8, 2013). Saul has a chapter on the production of monuments in his book on English church monuments, which includes both wooden and stone effigies, and a separate chapter which includes transi tombs; nowhere does he speculate on the time taken to sculpt cadaver monuments though. Nigel Saul, *English Church Monuments in the Middle Ages: History and Representation* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

6 Isabelle le Despender's will specified "the design, measurements, and iconography of [her] tomb monument ... at Tewkesbury Abbey." She requested to be imaged "all naked," but the tomb was never made. See Gail Gibson, *The Theater of Devotion: East Anglian Drama and Society in the Late Middle Ages* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 11.

7 Christina Welch, "For Prayers and Pedagogy: Contextualising English Carved Cadaver Monuments of the Late Medieval Social and Religious Elite," *Journal of Fieldwork of Religion* 8.2 (2013): 133–55.

8 Hiram Kümper, "Death," *Handbook of Medieval Culture: Fundamental Aspects and Conditions of the European Middle Ages*, ed. Albrecht Classen (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2015), 314–28. Philippe Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death*, trans. Helen Weaver (1981; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

Commonly termed *transi*-tombs, these carved cadaver sculptures are regularly described in terms of “rotting cadavers” or “putrefying corpses”⁹; however, as Cohen notes not all *transis* fit into this description. She asserts that in England the dominant style of these sculptures was of a wasted, gaunt, effectively anorexic individual.¹⁰ My research on the 38 carved cadavers in England supports this, and has found that the 3 extant Welsh examples also fit this profile. Indeed, none of the English and Welsh carved cadavers are of a decaying body. They all resemble an emaciated person close to death, or very recently deceased; none is depicted in a state of putrefaction. Indeed, on close inspection, the English and Welsh carved cadaver memorials are typically sculpted to show the individual in a liminal state, nether quite dead despite lying in a burial shroud, nor quite alive despite being imaged with muscles that are in tension.¹¹

Carved cadaver memorials were first described in terms of decomposing bodies by Panofsky in his seminal work *Tomb Sculpture: Its Changing Aspect from Ancient Egypt to Bernini*. Designating them as lifelike effigies, Panofsky, despite having seen relatively few of the memorials first-hand,¹² stated that they show

9 Eammon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England c1400 to c1580* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 1992), 306; Christopher Daniell, *Death and Burial in Medieval England, 1066–1550* (London: Routledge, 1997), 184; Richard Kieckhefer, *Theology in Stone: Church Architecture from Byzantium to Berkeley* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 153; Sophie Oosterwijk, “‘This Worlde is but a Pilgrimage’: Mental Attitudes in/to the Medieval *Danse Macabre*,” *Mental (Dis)Order in Later Medieval Europe*, ed. Sari Katajala-Peltmaa and Susanna Niiranen. *Later Medieval Europe*, 12 (Leiden and Boston: Brill Academic, 2014), 197–218; here 201.

10 Cohen, *Metamorphosis* (see note 1), 2.

11 At death a body relaxes completely (known as primary flaccidity) with the hands turning palm up and feet turning outwards. Within two to six hours *rigor mortis* sets in and this rigidity lasts for between twenty-four and eighty-four hours. After this time the body relaxes again (known as secondary flaccidity). The cadavers are not imaged in either a primary or secondary state of flaccidity, and indeed many are depicted in their last gasps. Most are definitely not imaged, resting in peace, as they have their heads tipped back in a most unnatural fashion exposing their necks, and often have their mouths open; none have their eyes closed.

12 Susie Nash, “Welcome and Introduction: Erwin Panofsky’s *Tomb Sculpture: Four Lectures on Its Changing Aspects from Ancient Egypt to Bernini* (1964),” *Fifty Years after Panofsky’s Tomb Sculpture*, conference presentation, Courtauld Institute, London (21 June, 2014). Nothing is written on Panofsky’s very short time in England. During his visiting professorship from the University of Hamburg, Germany, to New York University (1931–1934), Panofsky returned briefly to Germany in 1933. He left Germany for England in 1934 but later the same year was teaching at Princeton University in the U.S. See, “Erwin Panofsky,” *Institute of Advanced Studies* (2014). <https://www.ias.edu/people/panofsky> (last accessed on Jan. 29 2015)

the deceased as a mere corpse, wrapped only in a shroud which ... may reveal much of his nude form as was compatible with modesty, but nearly always divested of all signs of worldly power and wealth, and often represented in a state of more or less advanced decomposition.¹³

Given the influence of this description in many later scholarly works, there are three aspects that I shall query before moving on to explore and contextualize the 41 carved cadaver memorials (hereafter CCMs) extant in England and Wales.

Firstly, let's examine Panofsky's description of carved cadavers as imaging the individual in a state of advanced decomposition. As noted above, this is not an accurate description of the English and Welsh CCMs. None of the forty-one extant CCMs depict the sculpted individual in an advanced state of decomposition. While 3 do image a man with an open chest cavity (located at Flamborough, Keyson, and Worsborough), they do not show an individual with skin sloughing off the body, nor do they show worms or other creatures associated with bodily decay.

The rotting-body is a feature of many of the European carved cadavers, such as the memorial to François I de la Sarra (d. 1363) at La Sarraz, Vaud, Switzerland.¹⁴ Erected in the 1390s,¹⁵ this memorial is one of the earliest of the carved cadaver genre and depicts the deceased François I (a lay judge and thus a person of distinction) with worms coming out from his arms and legs, and toads or frogs resting on his eyes, lips, and genitalia. As Oosterwijk notes, "reptiles were traditionally associated with not just death and putrefaction, but also with evil."¹⁶ The positioning of the creatures reinforces this, as the genitals were associated biblically with sexual lust, whilst the eyes and mouth were capable of other venial sins such as greed and lies, respectively. However, the body of François I does not lie in a burial shroud, nor is it emaciated. Thus beyond depicting a naked corpse, it has little in common with the English and Welsh examples.

¹³ Erwin Panofsky, *Tomb Sculptures: Four Lectures to its Changing Aspects from Ancient Egypt to Bernini* (New York: Harry Abrahams, 1964), 64.

¹⁴ Cohen, *Metamorphosis* (see note 1), plate 32.

¹⁵ John Alberth, *From the Brink of the Apocalypse: Confronting Famine, War, Plague, and Death in the Later Middle Ages*, sec. ed. (2001; London: Routledge, 2010), 248.

¹⁶ Sophie Oosterwijk, "Food for Worms – Food for Thought: The Appearance and Interpretation of the 'Verminous' Cadaver in Britain and Europe," *Church Monuments* 20 (2005): 40–80 and 133–40; here 52.

The fifteenth-century memorial to the doctor and canon Guillaume Lefranchois (d. 1456¹⁷) from St. Barthelemy, Béthune, now at the Arras Museum, France, also depicts a deceased rotting body.¹⁸ The man is sculpted lying on rush matting, naked and emaciated with worms on his arms, chest, neck and face, and a mass of worms coming out of his belly. With legs crossed at the knee and his left hand covering his genitals, Lefranchois, like François I, protects his modesty without the benefit of a strategically placed burial shroud. A sculpted inscribed cloth, a *banderole*, originates from Lefranchois' mouth and winds its way around his naked form, like a large speech bubble; the wording begs for mercy in the afterlife.

Aquinas stated in *Summa Theologica* that worms were a metaphorical form of punishment for the damned originating from the corruption of sin.¹⁹ It is clear that the worms here act as “visual symbols of repentance”²⁰ with the sculpture depicting Lefranchois as a sinful but penitent figure. Muscle definition on the cadaver shows Lefranchois is not depicted skeletal, but his infested stomach shows the corpse is well into the process of decomposition.

The rotting forms of Bernhard Beham (d. 1507) in Hall in Tyrol, Austria, and Peter Niderwirt (d. 1522) in Eggenfelden, Germany (between Passau and Landshut), take the decomposing sculpture genre to its extreme.²¹ Beham is imaged as a rotting but intact body. Head resting on a pillow, he is sculpted with toads or frogs around his head, and with snakes emerging from his chest and wrapping themselves around his arms; with eyes and mouth open he is a grisly sight. Niderwirt is more skeletal in form although there appears to be some muscle definition on the sculpted body. A toad lurks close to the skull-like head and over his belly-button, and a snake winds its itself through his lower jaw, around his neck and under his left collar bone; other snakes coil themselves around his limbs.

A similarly creep-crawlie-ridden *transi*, although in miniature and crafted from bone and ivory rather than stone, can be found at the Schnütgen Museum in the Church of St. Cecilia, Cologne. Originating in western Switzerland in ca.1520, this cadaver shows a putrefying body with an open abdomen. Where

17 Cohen, *Metamorphosis* (see note 1), lists the date of death for Guillaume Lefranchois on plate 20 as 1456, yet lists the same memorial as death date 1446 in her chronological list of tombs on page 190.

18 Cohen, *Metamorphosis* (see note 1), plate 20.

19 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (Chicago: Henry Regnery & Co, 1953), 5455, see Question 97, Article 2.

20 Cohen, *Metamorphosis* (see note 1), 59.

21 Cohen, *Metamorphosis* (see note 1), plates 41–43.

the belly button would be on an intact body is a mouse; above this are several toads. The sculpting suggests an eviscerated body, where the internal organs are removed in a form of embalming as an effort to slow down the decomposition process; in Northern Europe this procedure was done when the corpse was to be transported from the place of death to the place of burial.²² However, disemboweling also served to rid the individual's physical form of the evidence of moral corruption,²³ and as such the presence of creatures associated with moral corruption adds to the iconicity of the item, the emotional response to the object which stood as a visceral reminder of one's earthly sinfulness.²⁴ Worms, toads, lizards, and flies are strewn across the decomposing form which, set in an elaborate box, is a tabletop sized *memento mori*.²⁵

None of the gruesome features of decomposition noted above are part of the English and Welsh CCMs, and as such they contradict Panofsky's overly generalized description of this sculptural genre. That Panofsky categorically claimed carved cadavers imaged the deceased in a state of decomposition is somewhat perplexing considering that in *Tomb Sculpture* he writes about, and includes a photograph of the rejected *transi* of Catherine de Medici by the ceramist Giralomo della Robbia.²⁶ This sculpture was commissioned by de Medici to depict herself "as she would look a few days after death."²⁷ It clearly shows a woman lately deceased with no signs of bodily decay. She rejected the sculpture for one that represented her in a more demure manner²⁸; the accepted sculpture made her younger and fuller in appearance, with her naked form less exposed to the view-

22 Estella Weiss-Krejci, "Excarnation, Evisceration, and Exhumation in Medieval and Post-Medieval Europe," *Interacting with the Dead: Perspectives on Mortuary Archaeology for the New Millennium*, ed. Gordon Rakita, Jane Buikstra, Lane Beck, and Sloan Williams (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005), 155–72. See also David Harley, "Political Post-Mortems and Morbid Anatomy in Seventeenth-Century England," *Social History of Medicine* 7.1 (1994): 1–28; here 5. And Katherine Park, "The Criminal and the Saintly Body: Autopsy and Dissection in Renaissance Italy," *Renaissance Quarterly* 47.1 (1994): 1–33; here 11.

23 See Danielle Westerhof, *Death and the Noble Body in Medieval England* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, Boydell Press, 2008).

24 See Paul Messaris for the concept of iconicity, the notion that imagery "makes a persuasive communication due [its] iconicity; the emotional response to the visual image presented," *Visual Persuasion; The Role of Images in Advertising* (London: Sage, 1997), viii–xv.

25 Schnütgen Museum, Cologne, 2011 Ludwig Collection Gift, B. 120. I would like to thank Dr. Katherine Weikert for bringing this to my attention.

26 Cohen, *Metamorphosis* (see note 1), plate 93.

27 Panofsky, *Tomb Sculpture* (see note 13), 80, 357.

28 Alberth, *From the Brink* (see note 15), 264–66.

er's eyes, as her left arm lies across her breasts, while her right arm holds her shroud cloth across the lower part of her body.²⁹

However, whilst Panofsky was highly generalized in his description of CCMs, Cohen took a more nuanced approach, largely due to her more extensive fieldwork. She divided the *transi* figures she researched into three categories: "an emaciated corpse with protruding intestines ... a shrivelled body with skin drawn taut across its bony frame ... [and] a decaying corpse covered by snakes and frogs."³⁰ As previously noted, Cohen stated that the second description was dominant in England. However, as Cohen's work did not include all carved cadavers extant in England, and she completely left out the Welsh examples, this article provides the most up-to-date and thorough work on late medieval CCMs in England and Wales, and emphatically stresses that their description as rotting is entirely incorrect.

My second dispute with Panofsky relates to his "compatible with modesty" description. The cadaver representation of Alice de la Pole (d. 1475) is in no way compatible with modesty standards of the day. Her marble tiered (or double-decker) *transi* features a fully clothed Alice dressed in widow's weeds (or possibly as a vowess), and acts as a standard resurrection effigy imaging her in the fullness of life.³¹ Beneath this is sculpted her naked cadaver, showing her as an old woman with shrunken breasts; indeed, it shares much with the rejected *transi* of Catherine de Medici, who was also initially sculpted as an emaciated elderly woman.³²

The memorial to de la Pole was commissioned by her toward the end of her life, and Goodall argues it may display naturalistic tendencies, especially in terms of effigy portraiture, as her sculpted elongated face does not accord with the mores of beauty at the time.³³ Certainly, Alice had every reason to be proud of her unusual looks, as at the age of twenty-four she "attracted the Duke of Burgundy's attentions, much to the jealous fury of her husband."³⁴ However, whether this naturalistic representation can be ascribed to her sculpted ca-

²⁹ Cohen, *Metamorphosis* (see note 1), plate 94.

³⁰ Cohen, *Metamorphosis* (see note 1), 2.

³¹ John Goodall, *God's House at Ewelme: Devotion and Architecture at a Fifteenth-century Alms-house* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 182–84.

³² Sergio Bertilli, *The King's Body: Sacred Rituals of Power in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, trans. R. Burr Litchfield (1990; University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University, 2001), 225.

³³ Goodall, *God's House* (see note 31), 184, 186–87, 190.

³⁴ Goodall, *God's House* (see note 31), 7–8.

daver is unclear. The carved cadaver is noticeably shorter than the resurrection effigy, and whilst physical shrinkage in later life is a known part of natural aging process, the cadaver sculpture is twenty-seven inches shorter than the *en vie* effigy; a little over two inches of shrinkage would be considered normal for a woman in her seventies and Alice died aged seventy-one.³⁵ However, despite the discrepancy in length between the two effigies, there are some notable similarities; long fingers, a pronounced chin, and a high forehead. The similarities suggest that the same sculptor carved both the *en vie* and *transi* bodies, but perhaps gave the youthful Alice a figure somewhat taller and more elegant than it may have been in reality. Although de la Pole commissioned the hugely expensive alabaster memorial and lived to see it erected, no paperwork survives. It will never be known for certain why the height discrepancy exists, but it would not be unreasonable to assume that either the sculptor wished to flatter his noble patron, or that she commissioned the effigy with an eye to vanity.

What is particularly striking about the carved cadaver of de la Pole is that the sculptor carved the Duchess of Suffolk fully naked, yet a lady of her high social status (she held the prestigious “Lady of the Order of the Garter” as did le Despender) would have remained fully clothed in public. Given that nakedness was associated biblically with shame, sin, self-disgust,³⁶ and fleshly disobedience,³⁷ for her to show effectively her naked aged form in public suggests there was a powerful symbolic reason for doing so. Indeed, it is notable that Catherine de Medici’s rejected carved cadaver showed her similarly exposed, whilst her accepted sculpture images her so that little of her naked torso is visible.³⁸

Alice de la Pole, like Catherine de Medici, was a woman of high social standing, although de la Pole was not royal. She was granddaughter to the poet Geoffrey Chaucer and one of the wealthiest women in the country when she died.³⁹ Whilst Alice, like her male English and Welsh CCM compatriots, covers her genital area, for Panofsky to class these sculptures as “reveal[ing as] much of his

35 Melinda Beck, “Yes, You Are Getting Shorter,” *Wall Street Journal* (20 September, 2011) <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424053111904194604576580720025344668> (last accessed on Jan. 29, 2015).

36 Sarah T. Beckwith, “Making the World in York and the York Cycle,” *Framing Medieval Bodies*, ed. Sarah Kay and Miri Rubin (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1994), 254–76; here 257.

37 Mary C. Flannery, “The Concept of Shame in Late Medieval English Literature,” *Literature Compass* 9.2 (2012): 166–82; here 166.

38 Alberth, *From the Brink* (see note 15), 264–65.

39 See Goodall (see note 31) for more information on Alice de la Pole.

nude form as was compatible with modesty”⁴⁰ negates the late medieval biblically-aligned concepts of immodesty and immortality,⁴¹ aspects that Catherine de Medici possibly saw more clearly in rejecting her naked carved cadaver.

Thirdly and finally, I also query Panofsky’s statement that carved cadaver memorials “nearly always” show individuals “divested of all signs of worldly power and wealth.”⁴² As Neal has argued, property was highly important in late medieval England in terms of masculine identity.⁴³ Thus for the 40 men memorialized by a carved cadaver, their lack of tangible substance, both in their emaciated physique and in their lack of signifiers of social status, was highly symbolic.

By the fifteenth century nakedness and poverty would have indicated humility by resonating with Christ’s love of the poor, and reminding people that material gain on earth was not helpful to an afterlife in paradise (Matt 19: 23–24). Although the naked poor had long largely been understood as physically “repugnant,”⁴⁴ by the fifteenth century giving alms to the impoverished was believed to assist directly in the donor’s salvation; as such the destitute had a high social capital in regard to the afterlife, despite not having an elevated social standing in this-life.⁴⁵

However, not all those in England with a CCM went so far as to totally shed their signs of worldly position. Several of the clerical CCMs include signs of rank and office in their sculpture. Bishop Fox (d. 1528) at Winchester Cathedral was imaged with his miter and staff of office, as was Bishop Alcock (d. 1500) whose CCM is at Ely cathedral, whilst Bishop Gardiner (d. 1555),⁴⁶ also at Winchester Cathedral, along with Bishop Bush (d. 1558) in Bristol Cathedral, are carved with their heads resting on their miters. All four clerics are shown then

⁴⁰ Panofsky, *Tomb Sculptures* (see note 13), 64.

⁴¹ Panofsky’s language is also highly gendered as it marginalizes CCMs of women.

⁴² Panofsky, *Tomb Sculpture* (see note 13), 64.

⁴³ Derek, G. Neal, *The Masculine Self in Late Medieval England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 64.

⁴⁴ L. Annaeus Seneca, *Minor Dialogs Together with the Dialog “On Clemency”* (translated by Aubrey Stewart, 1900) http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Of_Clemency/Book_II (last accessed on Jan. 29, 2015).

⁴⁵ Diana Wood, *Medieval Economic Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 43–44.

⁴⁶ In examining the design of the Gardiner’s sculpted shroud cloth, the memorial may well have been designed to include a crosier, as there is a sweeping indentation similar to that of Fox who, also in Winchester Cathedral, has a sculpted staff of office at his side. Further, at Gardiner’s feet is sculptured a book; a sign of wealth and knowledge.

clearly displaying “signs of worldly power and wealth”⁴⁷ and as such act to counter Panofsky’s claim.⁴⁸ However, it should be noted that because only the wealthiest of individuals could afford such an elaborate memorial, their very act of being memorialized through a carved cadaver demonstrated affluence and social status.

Nevertheless, whilst I may disagree with Panofsky’s reading of these allegedly “grisly” memorials, I, like him, also find them “fascinating”⁴⁹ and have for the past few years been exploring those located in Britain. Dating between ca. 1420/1425 and 1558, 10 of the 41 extant monuments conform to Panofsky’s tiered or double-decked tomb design. (Originally this was 11 as the memorial to Dean Thomas Heywood [d. 1492] in Lichfield Cathedral is known to have lost his resurrection or representation *au vif* effigy.) The extant 10 include the only carved cadaver of a female (the aforementioned Alice de la Pole at Ewelme). The remaining 31 conform to Panofsky’s single or isolated *transi* design.⁵⁰ As noted earlier, all but 2 CCMs are carved in stone; there is a tiered wooden English CCM in Worsborough, and an isolated example in Keyston.

English carved cadaver memorials (hereafter ECCMs) are relatively rare. As noted, there are only 38 extant, and the majority, 21, are of men with tonsures and thus of clerics. 1 extant ECCM is headless (at Dursley), and thus his status is undeterminable, leaving 16 non-clerical ECCMs. Of these 16, 7 are tiered monuments, and all of these are of known individuals: John Fitzalan (d. 1435) at Arundel; John Golafre (d. 1442) at Fyfield; Alice de la Pole (d. 1475) at Ewelme; John Barton (d. 1491) at Holme⁵¹; Henry Willoughby (d. 1528) at Wollaton; Roger Rockley (d. ca.1534 or 1533) at Worsborough. Of the remaining 9 non-clerical single ECCMs, 4 are of now-unknown males (at Frome, Stalbridge, Hemingborough, and Feniton), and 6 are of named males: John Meverill (d. 1462) at Tideswell; John Baret (d. ca.1463) at Bury St Edmunds, Richard Willoughby (d. 1471) at Wol-

⁴⁷ Panofsky, *Tomb Sculpture* (see note 13), 64.

⁴⁸ The tomb to John Baret (d. ca.1463) displays the Collar of Esses of the Lancastrians highlighting the importance of his social identity beyond the grave; see Ashby Kinch, *Imago Mortis: Mediating Images of the Dead in Late Medieval Culture*. Visualising the Middle Ages, 9 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 179. For information on the importance of the Lancastrian connection, see Pamela King, “The English Cadaver Tomb in the Late Fifteenth Century: Some Indications of a Lancastrian Connection,” *Dies Illa: Death in the Middle Ages: Proceedings of the 1983 Manchester Colloquium*, ed. Jane H. M Taylor. Vinaver Studies in French, 1 (Liverpool: Francis Cain, 1984), 45–57.

⁴⁹ Panofsky, *Tomb Sculpture* (see note 13), 63–64.

⁵⁰ Panofsky, *Tomb Sculpture* (see note 13), 64.

⁵¹ The monument memorializes John Barton and his wife, although the carved cadaver is only of a male and is much shorter in length than the effigy above.

laton; Marmaduke Constable the little (d. 1530) at Flamborough; William Weston (d. 1541) at Clerkenwell; John Denston (d. ca.1473)⁵² at Denston.

Of the 21 extant clerical ECCMs, 5 are tiered: Richard Fleming (d. 1430) at Lincoln; Henry Chichele (d. 1443) at Canterbury; William Sponne (d. 1447) at Towcester; Thomas Beckington (d. ca.1450) at Wells; Hugh Asheton (d. 1522) at Cambridge. 17 are single clerical memorials: Thomas Haxey (d. 1425) at York⁵³; John Careway (d. 1443) at Fulbourne; John Carpenter (d. 1476) at Westbury; Thomas Heywood (d. 1492) at Lichfield [originally tiered]; John Alcock (d. 1508) at Ely; William Sylke (d. 1508) at Exeter; George Sydenham (d. 1524) at Salisbury; Richard Fox (d. 1528) at Winchester; John Wakeman (d. 1530) at Tewkesbury⁵⁴; William Parkhouse (d. 1540) at Exeter; Stephen Gardiner (d. 1555) at Winchester; Thomas Bennett (d. 1558) at Salisbury; Paul Bush (d. 1558) at Bristol. There are 3 now anonymous sculptures bearing a tonsure at Paignton, Southwark, and Keyston.

Welsh carved cadaver memorials (WCCMs) are rarer still, as there are only 3 in existence. All are carved from stone, all are of unknown males, but only 1 has a tonsure and is thus clearly clerical (at Tenby). Unlike the English examples, they are found only in the south of the country; the ECCMS range from Kent in the East to Devon in the West, and from Hampshire in the South to Yorkshire in the North, so geographically they cover much of England.

The WCCMs include 2 well-carved and anatomically fairly accurate sculptures (at Tenby and Llandaff), and 1 that is significantly less well carved, and less well observed anatomically (at St. Dogmaels). Indeed the WCCM at St. Dogmaels suggests a local carver rather than an experienced sculptor, as the carved cadaver is highly stylized. The St. Dogmaels example displays the typically emaciated look of the genre, protects his modesty with a strategically placed hand and the folds of his shroud cloth, and is lying in his open burial shroud. How-

52 *In situ* the CCM at Denston is marked as anonymous as the memorial brasses are missing, but it is noted that the tomb is possibly of John Denston and his wife Katherine who founded the chantry in the church; both have a carved cadaver but the female figure is fully shrouded with only her hands and face uncovered whilst he is imaged naked.

53 The provenance of this carved cadaver is dubious but *in situ* currently at York Minster, it is still listed as being of Dean Thomas Haxey. See Pamela King's work for more information, "The Treasurers Cadaver in York Minster Reconsidered," *The Church and Learning in Later Medieval Society: Essays in Honour of R. B. Dobson: Proceedings of the 1999 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. Caroline Barron, Jenny Starford, and R. B. Dobson. Harlaxton Medieval Studies, 11 (Donington, Lincolnshire: Shaun Tyas, 2002), 196–209.

54 The provenance of this carved cadaver is dubious but *in situ* currently at Tewksbury Abbey, it is still listed as being of John Wakeman; King, "The Treasurers Cadaver at York Minster" (see note 53).

ever, the shroud is canoe shaped, with high sides reminiscent of a boat. The body has some muscle detail, but the torso is largely barrel shaped, and the man is sculpted with a significantly larger upper body than is normal; indeed, with his overly large upper body and hands that almost reach his knees rather than sitting mid-thigh as is physically typical, gives him a gorilla-like physique. The hyoid bone, and thyroid and cricoid cartilage in his neck are overly prominent, and there is not the sophisticated imaging of the sternocleidomastoid muscle that is found on the other 2 WCCMs, as well as most ECCMs. Further, he does not have the correct number of ribs, and although having carved nipples and a belly-button, lacks general overall anatomical detail. It would not be unreasonable to assume that the carver lacked detailed anatomical knowledge and was not highly accomplished in sculptural techniques.

The Llandaff CCM, although missing his legs, and despite being in a fairly worn condition, evidences a far greater proficiency of workmanship and anatomical knowledge than the St. Dogmaels carved cadaver. The torso of the Llandaff CCM is shaped naturalistically, with good muscle definition around the neck, and his pectoral muscles evident. His stomach area is somewhat stylized with three ridges signifying the separation between the exterior oblique muscles and the central *rectus abdominis*. Unusually he is sculpted tilting his head slightly to the right, whereas the other CCMs in England and Wales all have heads looking straight up; he also has a rather stylized hairstyle.

The Tenby CCM is better defined anatomically than the Llandaff CCM, and the work displays a high level of anatomical knowledge. This sculpture also has a curious quirk, as the sculpted man has very prominent front teeth. However, the Tenby CCM is particularly interesting for two square holes, one situated at each end of the sculpture where the missing shroud-knots would be located, which may provide a clue as to its manufacture. These two holes are of slightly different sizes but each are approximately an inch or so square, and indicate that the shroud knots were separate from the rest of the carving. It is possible that the added shroud knots could have been made of wood and the join between them and the stone cadaver made invisible by the polychroming process; the sculpture would be covered in gesso (a fixer), and then painted. Interestingly, the tiered ECCM to Sponne at Towcester comprises a stone carved resurrection body with a wooden head and hands; the effigy *en vie* shows evidence of polychrome and as such the differing materials would not have been evident once this procedure had been carried out.

The use of separate shroud-knots on the Tenby CCM is most likely a cost saving measure for a shorter (and thus cheaper) block of stone would be required: large quantities of stone would need to be chipped away (wasted) to leave the sculpted shroud-knots. The Sponne effigy would similarly need a smaller piece

of stone by using wooden hands, as they extend upwards in a prayer position and to carve them as part of the effigy would require a much deeper block of stone, most of which would be carved away. Interestingly, the wooden head on the Sponne effigy does not save stone, as the head lies on a stone carved pillow which is part of the overall memorial. But as the carved wooden head is rather simplistic in style, I suggest that again this could be a cost saving measure, it being cheaper to carve the wooden head than to pay an expert in facial carving to craft Bishop Sponne *en vie*.

Some other CCMs in England are also suggestive of production techniques. The Southwark example has a large wedge-shape hole at the foot-end of the cadaver; the hole is incorporated into the shroud design and is largely concealed by the decorative shroud knot. This wedge-shaped recess may be redolent of the method of manufacture. An image from an unknown artist who illustrated a French translation of Giovanni Boccaccio's *De Claris Mulieribus* as *Le Livre de Femmes Nobles et Renomees*, ca.1440, shows a female sculptor carving a life-size effigy; the effigy is at a forty-five degree angle.⁵⁵ This tilt of the sculpture in the illustration implies the stone may have been supported at the bottom with a wooden wedge that provided appropriate support. The illustration and the Southwark CCM are reasonably contemporary, and carving techniques have "remained more or less unchanged since antiquity,"⁵⁶ thus the correspondence between them is, I argue, worthy of further exploration. It is noticeable that surprisingly little work exists on the manufacture of CCMs.

The anonymous French illustration raises a further issue in regard to the creation of sculptures, as it demonstrates that sculptors of this time were not exclusively male. Indeed another illustration of the era, again from an anonymous French translation of one of Boccaccio's work, this time *Des Cleres et Nobles Femmes* (*De Claris Mulieribus*) dating to ca.1470, depicts a female artist in her atelier⁵⁷; on a work bench are several unpainted sculptures. The two illustrations imply that women were employed as sculptors and painters/polychromers at this

55 Barbara, W. Sarudy. "Illuminated Manuscripts – Women Artists from the 1400 s," *It's About Time blog* (17 February, 2014) [http://bjws.blogspot.co.uk/search/label/1400 s%20Women%20Artists](http://bjws.blogspot.co.uk/search/label/1400%20Women%20Artists)

(last accessed on Jan. 29, 2015), plate 8. However, Sarudy's blog states the image is from the British Museum, Royal 16 GV, although the image does not appear on their website <http://www.british-library.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=8359&CollID=16&NStart=160705> (last accessed on Jan. 29, 2015).

56 "Sculpting Techniques," *Victoria and Albert Museum* (2014) <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/s/sculpture-techniques/> (last accessed on Jan. 29, 2015)

57 Sarudy "Manuscripts" (see note 55), plate 7 (Spencer Collection MS. 33, f. 37v).

time. Although both illustrations are from France, it is not impossible that female artisans worked in England, notably in Southwark, just outside London, which was home to a large group of foreign artisans unable to gain employment in the city of London due to guild membership restrictions on foreign workers.⁵⁸

Southwark was a known center of artistic excellence, and sculptors there produced work of a very high quality. These artisans may, given the history of dissection in Europe,⁵⁹ have been responsible for the largely anatomically accurate CCMs in England and Wales. It is notable that most carved cadaver sculptures pre-date Vesalius (d. 1564), the father of anatomy whose illustrated work *De Humani Corporis Fabrica* (1543) was based on direct observation of dead and dying human bodies⁶⁰; not an experience available to wider society. Prior to Vesalius and the Renaissance interest in anatomy, detailed knowledge of the human body was somewhat limited, particularly in England where dissection, until the advent of anatomical classes in universities, was restricted to embalming practices for the social elite, and vivisection as part of the punishment for acts of high treason.⁶¹ It is then somewhat surprising that most CCMs in England and Wales exhibit good anatomical detail, despite dating to almost a century before the regular anatomization of bodies. However, close to Southwark's artisan population was the hospital of St. Thomas; a place where talented artisans may have been able to glean knowledge of the human form via the surgeons who worked there.

Medieval hospitals were hospitable institutions supported by the laity and run by clerics that gave relief to those in need, i.e., the poor, the sick, and the old.⁶² Whilst spiritual care was key, a patient's physical health was also tended to.⁶³ From the earliest days of hospitals, surgeons and blood-letters were brought in to perform treatments that involved blood-shedding, which was an activity forbidden to priests after the Council of Tours (1163). Evidence for surgeons working at St. Thomas's Hospital comes from the records of a London mercer who, in

58 Jean Wilson, *The Archaeology of Shakespeare; The Material Legacy of Shakespeare's Theatre* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Sutton, 1995), 85.

59 Park, "The Criminal and the Sainly Body" (see note 22).

60 Luke Wilson, "William Harvey's Prelectionares: The Performance of the Body in the Renaissance Theater of Anatomy," *Representations* 17 (1987): 62–95.

61 David Harley, "Political Post-Mortems and Morbid Anatomy in Seventeenth-Century England," *Social History of Medicine* 7.1 (1994): 1–28; here 4, 5

62 Carol Rawcliffe, "The Hospitals of Later Medieval London," *Medical History* 28.1 (1984), 1–21; here 3, 6.

63 Carol Rawcliffe, "The Form and Function of Medieval Hospitals," *Tudor Health Reform Conference*, Gresham College (22 June 2011) <http://www.gresham.ac.uk/lectures-and-events/part-two-the-form-and-function-of-medieval-hospitals> (last accessed on Jan. 29, 2015).

1479, put aside money to allow the surgeon Thomas Thorneton to “continue his daily besynes and comfort of the poure, sore and seke peple lakkyng helpe and money to pay”; the hospital is specifically named as one of the benefitting institutions.⁶⁴ Rawcliffe argues that whilst medieval surgeons such as Thorneton would have saved many lives,⁶⁵ medieval people, especially those in hospitals where beds were shared and spiritual care of the soul was prioritized over the physical wellbeing of the body, would have found fighting off disease and infection difficult.⁶⁶

Hospitals fundamentally contained those in a poor physical condition.⁶⁷ As well as the sick, elderly people moved to the hospital to be cared for in old age in exchange for their property,⁶⁸ and thus medieval hospitals largely contained people highly likely to die. Further, many hospitals’ patients would have been emaciated, suffering from extreme hunger, or wasting illnesses such as the flux (dysentery) or phthisis (tuberculosis).⁶⁹ Thus, although it is commonly assumed medieval carvers worked from pattern books,⁷⁰ I contend that the highly skilled sculptors working in Southwark⁷¹ may well have had access the emaciated living and dead patients at the hospital of St. Thomas, via surgeons. In my conversations with anatomical sculptors and anatomists about the English and Welsh CCMs,⁷² these experts assert that the vast majority of the carved cadavers are too anatomically correct for the detail to be taken from a second-hand source; they assert that only first-hand observational knowledge of the emaciated human form would give such a detailed knowledge of the body. Surgeons could have provided this.

⁶⁴ Rawcliffe, *Hospitals of London* (see note 62), 8.

⁶⁵ Carol Rawcliffe, *Medicine and Society in Later Medieval England* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1995), 72.

⁶⁶ Rawcliffe, *Medieval Hospitals* (see note 63).

⁶⁷ Anon, “The Foundation of St. Thomas,” *The Old Operating Theatre Museum – The History of St Thomas Hospital Part 1 Medieval* (undated) <http://www.thegarret.org.uk/pdfs/exhibitions/stthomashospitalmedieval.pdf> (last accessed on Jan. 29, 2015).

⁶⁸ Anon, “St. Thomas” (see note 67).

⁶⁹ Faye Getz, ed., *Healing and Society in Medieval England: A Middle English Translation of the Pharmaceutical Writings of Gilbertus Anglicus* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991).

⁷⁰ Gerald W. R. Ward, ed., *The Grove Encyclopaedia of Material and Techniques in Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 162.

⁷¹ Wilson, *The Archaeology of Shakespeare* (see note 58), 84.

⁷² Conversations with Crook (ongoing from November 2011, see note 4), and editor in chief of *Gray’s Anatomy: The Anatomical Basis of Clinical Practice* (Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone/Elsevier, 2008), Prof. Susan Standing (June 7, 2013). To date nothing has been published on the anatomical accuracy of CCMs.

It is clear that although in medieval times dissection was rare, it did occur. Versalius had learnt dissection from Jacobus Sylvius (1478–1555), a teacher at the University of Paris,⁷³ but surgery in northern Europe predates this.⁷⁴ Thomas Morestede (d. 1450), a physician to the kings Henry IV, V, and VI,⁷⁵ and successor to John Bradmore (d. 1412), author of the surgical treatise *Philomena* (ca. 1403–1412), is alleged to have written that a surgeon should “have a thorough understanding of the principles of surgery, in theory and practice, [and] ... all things which are comprehended in anatomy.”⁷⁶ Additionally, an illustration from ca.1300 shows a surgeon dissecting a female body whilst two clerics look on,⁷⁷ and an autopsied individual dating from the thirteenth century was recently analyzed.⁷⁸ As such, it is possible that surgeons allowed others interested in the body, such as highly skilled sculptors, to closely observe patients who, in their emaciated state, evidenced the skeletal and muscular frame.

Direct observation of the CCMs in England and Wales makes clear which carved cadavers were sculpted by individuals without detailed first-hand knowledge of the body, especially knowledge of the interior of the human form. The ECCM at Keyston images an eviscerated body, an otherwise intact body with the internal organs removed and thus the backbone evident in torso. Without doubt the carver of the cadaver must have seen this post-mortem operation and was able to accurately recreate the look of the corpse after the procedure; this form of embalming dates to ancient times,⁷⁹ with records in Northern Europe

73 Margaret, J. Osler, *Reconfiguring the World: Nature, God, and Human Understanding from the Middle Ages to Early Modern Europe*. History of Science (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 34.

74 Michael, T. Walton and Phylis, J. Walton, *Medical Practitioners and Law in Fifteenth Century London* (Stroud: Lulu, 2007).

75 Charles Knight, *London*, vol.5 (London: Charles Knight & Co, 1842), 168.

76 Juliet Barker, *Agincourt; The King, the Campaign, the Battle* (London: Little, Brown Books 2005), 142. See on Bradshaw, Sheila, J. Lang, “The ‘Philomena’ of John Bradmore and its Middle English Derivative: A Perspective on Surgery in Late Medieval England,” Ph.D. diss. 1998, University of St. Andrew’s <http://research-repository.st-andrews.ac.uk/handle/10023/4910> (last accessed on Jan. 29, 2015).

77 Anon, “Anatomy Maps: Science meets Philosophy.” *DesignBoom* (undated) http://www.designboom.com/history/a_m2.html (last accessed on Jan. 29, 2015); here plate 3.

78 Philippe, Charlier, Isabelle Huynh-Charlier, Joel Poupon, Eliose Lancelot, Paula F. Campos, Dominique Favier, Gael-Francois Jeannel, Maurizio. R. Bonti, Geoffrey L. de la Garndmaison and Christian Herve, “A Glimpse into the Early Origins of Medieval Anatomy through the Oldest Conserved Human Dissection (Western Europe, 13th C, AD)” *Archives of Medical Science* 10.2 (2013): 366–73.

79 Robert G. Mayer, *Embalming: History, Theory and Practice*, 5th ed. (2000; New York: McGraw-Hill, 2012).

dating from at least the fourteenth-century.⁸⁰ The carved cadaver of Rockley at Worsborough meanwhile, has the man's intestines lying horizontally instead of vertically. There is muscle definition on the body, and it is otherwise well observed, leading to the conclusion that the sculptor had observed emaciated bodies and had a good understanding of the skeletal and muscular frame, but had not seen, or had not seen enough of, the bodies interior to recall the internal organs accurately.

However, not all English and Welsh CCMs are well observed anatomically. The now anonymous ECCM in Stalbridge depicts a man with a barrel-shaped body, and insufficient ribs. His hands though are finely carved in a most realistic fashion, as is his face, which shows a corpse with a chinstrap holding his mouth in a closed position. Both the hands and head would be physical attributes viewable in everyday life, as would a corpse with its mouth held closed, whereas having access to inspect a ribcage in a time before mirrors and when nudity was unusual, would be far harder. As previously noted, the WCCM at St. Dogmaels, is another example of poor anatomical detail and both St. Dogmaels and Stalbridge are hamlets located a long way from London, where the carvers of these more homespun pieces, may not have had ready access to emaciated bodies or corpses.

Whereas close scrutiny of the human body may have informed many of the sculptors of these usual cadaver memorials, it is a close inspection of extant memorials themselves that is shedding new light on their manufacture. My empirical research has shown that whilst the majority of the CCMs in England and Wales were carved from a single piece of stone and installed intact, this was not always the case. The carved cadaver of Stephen Gardiner (d. 1555) at Winchester Cathedral is a notable exception, for although he is sculpted from a single piece of stone, the stone was cut into three pieces for installation. There is a clean cut that runs across the entire width of the sculpture at his knees (and indeed cuts through the very middle of his knee caps), and his head (including the miter on which it lies and the top section of the shroud) is separate from the rest of the body. The cut area between the head and the body is particularly interesting as his neck was cleanly removed and the sculpture installed in its niche so that, as much as possible, the folds of the shroud cloth lined up. Interestingly, if the sculpture were intact, it would be too long to fit into its chapel niche. The cuts on the sculpture are precise, and the realignment of the three separated pieces has been excellently executed. As the CCM itself is beautifully carved and well observed anatomically I suggest the removal of the neck, and the cut

80 Park "The Criminal and the Saintly Body" (see note 22), 1.

across the knee date to the installation of the memorial. Given that typically CCMs were gesso'd and polychromed, these cuts would have been invisible after this process was completed; however, Gardiner's CCM was never polychromed.

The detached head has generally been attributed to iconoclastic damage. In 1899, Sergeant suggested Reformation mutilation was responsible for the sculpture's current condition, with "the head being knocked off the figure lying in a long niche on the outside of the chantry."⁸¹ However, this explanation ignores that the head section was cleanly cut from the body, that there is no damage to the miter, and that there is a small hole in the base of the detached head that indicates that the head was pegged onto a shaped piece of stone (or possibly wood) that replaced the missing neck; this piece if appropriately carved and polychromed, would give the body an intact appearance. The peg hole and the precise positioning of the sections suggests that alterations were done to the sculpture after it had been fully carved, and this infers it was not sculpted in Winchester Cathedral with immediate access to the niche in which the CCM was to lie.

The Gardiner cadaver sculpture is of very high quality and the anatomical detailing is very good. During the medieval period, Southwark with its highly skilled artisans and continental stonemasons⁸² was part of the diocese of Winchester. Gardiner, who received the "wealthy bishopric of Winchester" in 1531,⁸³ died in Whitehall on November 12, 1555. His body was eviscerated with his intestines buried the same day before the high altar of the Church of St. Mary Overie, Southwark,⁸⁴ while his body was brought to Winchester Cathedral for interment a few months later.⁸⁵

The funeral procession of Gardiner's corpse from Southwark to Winchester was a grand affair, as fitting such a moneyed and high status individual. Leaving

⁸¹ Philip, W. Sergeant, *Bell's Cathedrals: The Cathedral Church of Winchester: A Description of its Fabric and a Brief History of the Episcopal See* (London: George Bell & Son 1899), 74. Online at: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/20346/20346-h/20346-h.htm#image27> (last accessed on Jan. 29, 2015).

⁸² Wilson, *The Archeology of Shakespeare* (see note 58), 84.

⁸³ John Cannon, 'Gardiner, Stephen', *The Oxford Companion to British History* (2002). http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Stephen_Gardiner.aspx (last accessed on Jan. 29, 2015).

⁸⁴ Stephen H. Cassan, *The Lives of the Bishops of Winchester from Birinus, the First Bishop of the West Saxons to the Present Time I* (London: C&J Rivington, 1827), 531.

⁸⁵ George Worley, *Southwark Cathedral: Formerly the Collegiate Church of St. Saviour, otherwise St. Mary Overie; A Short History of the Fabric, with some Account of the College and See* (London: George Bell & Son, 1905), 23. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/24616/24616-h/24616-h.htm> (last accessed on Jan. 29, 2015).

Southwark on February 23, 1556 it arrived at Winchester Cathedral on February 27, and included an effigy “to the very life, with a mitre and other pontifical dress.”⁸⁶ It is highly unlikely the effigy mentioned was the stone carved cadaver, as his ECCM is naked, but the reference to a funeral effigy demonstrates that Gardiner was able to afford a lavish funeral, and grand memorial.⁸⁷ The burial of Gardiner’s body took place on February 28, and as his chapel was not yet built, it was buried on the left side of the high altar.⁸⁸ It is not known whether Gardiner commissioned his CCM before his death as no records exist for this or any other CCM in England or Wales, but Gardiner made no mention of the sculpture in his correspondence despite being aware of his failing health.⁸⁹

Gardiner’s executors were responsible for commissioning his chapel, which contains, in a niche on the right aisle of Winchester Cathedral, his carved cadaver. One of Gardiner’s named executors was Bishop Thirlby of Ely Cathedral,⁹⁰ and Thirlby would have been familiar with the carved cadaver of Bishop Alcock (d. 1500) in Ely Cathedral, and all would have been familiar with the ECCM of Bishop Richard Fox (d. 1528) whose chantry in Winchester Cathedral was finished in 1513.⁹¹ Given that it had taken the executors over three months to arrange the reburial of Gardiner’s body, it is highly likely the chapel took several years to commission and build, and thus was not fully ready by the time the last Roman Catholic monarch, Queen Mary, died on November 17, 1558. The potential rushing of the Gardiner cadaver would not only account from the lack of polychroming, but also from the fact that his feet are poorly detailed and rather blocky and unfinished in appearance; a definite contrast to the rest of his body.

To add weight to the potentially rushed and incomplete state of Gardiner’s carved cadaver it should be noted that the last ECCM, that of Bishop Paul

86 William Taylor, *Annals of St. Mary Overy: Historical and Descriptive account of St. Saviour’s Church and Paris, with Numerous Illustrations* (London: Nichols and Son, 1833), 36.

87 David Lepine, “‘High Solemn Ceremonies’: the Funerary Practice of the Late Medieval English Higher Clergy,” *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 61.1 (2010): 18–39; here 28, 36.

88 James A. Muller, ed., *The Letters of Stephen Gardiner* (1933; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 502, 508–16.

89 Edwin Burton, “Stephen Gardiner,” *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton, 1907), 383–84. http://oce.catholic.com/index.php?title=Stephen_Gardiner (last accessed on Jan. 29, 2015).

90 Taylor, *Annals of St. Mary Overy* (see note 86), 36.

91 Bishop Richard Fox designed his own chantry and used the master mason William Virtue, who was “responsible for creating King Henry VIII’s tomb in Westminster Abbey, and was ...employed by Fox on the great altar screen in Southwark cathedral”; it is a magnificent piece and the body anatomically very well observed. See, Clayton Drees, *Bishop Richard Fox of Winchester: Architect of the Tudor Age* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co, 2014), 107, 126.

Bush of Bristol (d. 1558) is anatomically very poor with a barrel body and a paucity of ribs. He is not laid in a burial shroud, as was typical of the genre in England and Wales, but is carved lying on a rush mat with a piece of cloth wrapped around his groin area (similar in appearance to a pair of shorts). His head lies on his polychromed miter and beside him lies his polychromed staff of office, but there is no evidence his body was polychromed. His head is highly stylized as are his knees, and there are two holes in his (damaged) feet, suggesting the main part of foot on both legs may have not been part of the initial structure; this could be attributed to a sculpting error, but more work needs to be conducted on this sculpture.

Bush's sculpture is a carved cadaver in that he is imaged emaciated, but he is atypical in many factors including a lack of burial shroud, the poor quality of carving, and inexactness of the anatomical features for a man of his social status and wealth. It is probable the sculpture here represented him dead rather than at death for socio-religious reasons; his eyes are carved open but his mouth is closed, and Bush looks at peace. The sculpture, I suggest, speaks to the CCM genre and reinforces that Bush was a faithful Roman Catholic despite having married when marriage for clergy was permitted during the reign of Edward VI,⁹² but it is tempered with the new Elizabethan Protestant rejection of purgatory by showing Bush as a corpse; Bush died less than a month before Queen Mary, and his CCM appears not to have commissioned until after his death.

Bush's sculpture as the last ECCM stands in stark contrast to the first,⁹³ that of Henry Chichele (d. 1443), bishop of Canterbury Cathedral. Chichele commissioned his memorial ca. 1423 and as such spent around twenty years praying over his emaciated form; given the huge cost of this sculpture, it is perhaps of no surprise that anatomically it is excellent for the time. Undoubtedly the highly educated and pious Chichele would have requested it to be as realistic as possible. As noted previously, the anatomization of the body was relatively rare in England at this point in history, and as such visual depictions of the body were often very stylized with little in the way of muscle definition or skeletal

⁹² Edmund Venable, "Bush, Paul," *Dictionary of National Biography* 8 (1885–1900) [http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Bush,_Paul_\(DNB00\)](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Bush,_Paul_(DNB00)) (last accessed on Jan. 29, 2015).

⁹³ King has suggested that the York Minster carved cadaver, which is currently attributed to Dean Heywood, maybe of the canon and treasurer John Newton, who died in 1414. If this is correct it would make the York CCM the oldest. However, as this is still speculative, and as this CCM is in very poor condition, for the purposes of this chapter, Chichele's CCM is listed as the first (see note 53).

framing evident in imagery.⁹⁴ Yet both muscles and bones are evident on Chichele's sculpture, albeit somewhat masked by layers of paint. The Fellows of All Souls College, Oxford, a college Chichele had founded in 1437, have always seen to the upkeep of the memorial due to the terms of a specific endowment. The memorial has been repaired by the college several times and was last repainted in 1897.⁹⁵ Only very close inspection finds details such as the xiphoid process (the sternum extending into the thoracic cage) and veining on the arms, hands, and feet.

The veining on Chichele's ECCM provides a clue as to what the original carved cadaver may have looked like when first polychromed, but further evidence of this comes from the ECCM of John Baret (d. 1463 or 1467), a wealthy cloth merchant from Bury St Edmunds, which was conserved by the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. In 2003, the conservator, Victor Borges, published a paper about this memorial, noting there were traces of red and green veins painted onto the flesh toned carved cadaver.⁹⁶ It would appear that the polychroming on these memorials made them lifelike, that is, as they would have been at the time of death rather than as a corpse in the process of decay.

Two other sophisticatedly sculptured ECCMs have veins as part of the carved body. The CCM of Sir John Fitzalan (d. 1435), 14th Earl of Arundel, 4th Baron Maltravers, who died from a wound after the Battle of Gerberoy, has very finely worked veins on the hands, whilst the CCM of John Denston (d. 1473), a highly influential and wealthy Suffolk landowner⁹⁷ whose perpetual chantry was founded in 1475 at St. Nicholas church in Denston,⁹⁸ features an impressive array of veins on all limbs, hands and feet. Veins are also clearly visible on the Tewkesbury CCM, Bennet's beautifully carved ECCM in Salisbury, and faintly on Fox's superbly executed ECCM at Winchester Cathedral, but these are only a small number of 41 CCMs in England and Wales, for veins appear associated only

⁹⁴ See Peter, M. Jones, *Medieval Medicine in Illuminated Manuscripts* (London: The British Library, 1998), and Nancy G. Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine; An Introduction to Knowledge and Practice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

⁹⁵ Stephen R. Clarke, *Vestigia Anglicana, or Illustrations of the More Interesting and Debateable Points in History and Antiquities of England: From the Earliest Ages to the Accession of the House of Tudor*, Vol. 2 (London: T&G Underwood, 1826), 267.

⁹⁶ Victor Borges, "Conservation of an English Cadaver Tomb," *Conservational Journal* 45 (Autumn 2003): <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/journals/conservation-journal/issue-45/conservation-of-an-english-cadaver-tomb/> (last accessed on Jan. 29, 2015).

⁹⁷ Samuel Moore, "Patrons of Letters in Norfolk and Suffolk, c1450 II," *PMLA* 28.1 (1913): 79–105; here 83–84.

⁹⁸ Anon., "A History of Saint Nicholas' Church Denston" (2012). <http://www.bansfieldbenefice.org.uk/denston/history/> (last accessed on Jan. 29, 2015).

with the most sophisticated sculptures. However, it should be noted that several CCMs are not in a good condition and that veining and other anatomical detail may have been present initially. Certainly my fieldwork has established that detailed muscular and skeletal definition was a typical part of the overall look with only a few CCMs poorly executed in this regard (at Bristol, Stalbridge, and St. Dogmaels).

Another clue about how carved cadavers may have appeared in their day can be found in two illustrations in the late medieval poem, “A Disputacion betwixt Body and Worms.”⁹⁹ The two images appear to represent the tomb of a wealthy (possibly royal) male and female, each memorialized in a separate tiered monument. Both drawings show the resurrection effigy of each individual and also one of their naked cadaver in a burial shroud.¹⁰⁰ The shrouds in the illustrations are typical of CCMs, with a hand holding the shroud cloth over the genital area for modesty. It is unclear how enfleshed the illustrated cadavers are, as the images appear to have a skull-like head, but the bodies do not appear to be skeletal (this is the case with the Worsborough CCM, although Rockely has an open torso showing intestines). Of particular interest in these illustrations is that creepy-crawlies are drawn on the cadavers; worms and lizard-like creatures are pictured on top of, not coming out of, the bodies. Whether these illustrations, with their depictions of creep-crawlies, are representative of English and Welsh CCMs of their day is debatable, as the creatures appear in the story to be didactic warning of the perils of sinful behavior.¹⁰¹ Further, the perspective of the illustrations suggests the cadavers might be depicted in their graves rather than as the lower level of a tiered tomb. But regardless of exactly what they are meant to illustrate, they do show that certain creatures were associated with the process of decay in medieval England. Further, and most importantly, they indicate that the representation of the decomposition process was decidedly less graphic than that is often found in on the Continent.

Only one CCM in England and Wales is in any way verminous. The CCM said to be of John Wakeman (d. 1549), the last Abbot of Tewkesbury Abbey, Gloucestershire, features snakes, a mouse, and a frog or toad; all of the creatures lie on top of his intact cadaver or inside his shroud. Carved in relief, doubtless these

⁹⁹ Panofsky, *Tomb Sculpture* (see note 13), plates 266a & b; see <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/0c04p0xq#page-3> (last accessed on Jan. 29, 2015).

¹⁰⁰ Neither illustrated tomb in “A Disputacion betwixt Body and Wormes” is extant. British Museum MS Add.37049.

¹⁰¹ Sophie Oosterwijk, “Food for Worms – Food for Thought: The Appearance and Interpretation of the ‘Verminous’ Cadaver in Britain and Europe,” *Church Monuments* 20 (2005): 40–80 and 133–140; here 136.

would have provided iconicity, especially once polychromed, and their symbolism would have resonated with a contemporary audience. The snake had a biblical significance, standing for the sin of lust and disobedience¹⁰²; one snake crawls across his left knee, and another slithers through the shroud beside his right leg. A toad or frog lurks close to his left ear in the shroud; left being the side on which Jesus places the damned in Matthew 15:33. The frog/toad was understood as symbolic of uncleanness¹⁰³ and associated with the sins of gluttony and avarice.¹⁰⁴ The mouse sits on his belly button and was understood as an allegory for the soul; if the mouse had been polychromed black it would have shown him sinful, but if the mouse were red then his soul was good.¹⁰⁵ Here then is a man symbolically of human sin and humbled in death, emaciated and naked.

Nakedness, an overarching theme of CCMs, has never been a simple signifier. While it was not uncommon during the late medieval period for people to sleep naked,¹⁰⁶ as Albrecht Classen notes, already during the Middle Ages nakedness was associated with shame,¹⁰⁷ and indeed public nakedness was considered a disgrace. In *The Pardoner's Tale*, Chaucer associates the "scatnesse of clothing" and a display of genitalia with shamefulness.¹⁰⁸ Certainly in biblical terms nakedness was associated with disobedience, lust, and shame through the Fall narrative (Gen 2:25). This was reinforced through the writings of Church fathers such as Augustine, who in *The City of God Against the Pagans* equates nudity with indecency and shame, again due to the Fall.¹⁰⁹ But equally, in some circumstances, nakedness had social currency as it was associated with the poor and humble whom Jesus helped during his ministry, and who were es-

102 Hope, B. Werness, *Continuum Encyclopaedia of Animal Symbolism in World Art* (New York: Continuum 2006), 382.

103 Werness, *Animal Symbolism* (see note 102), 161.

104 Michael. Ferber, *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols*, sec. ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 82–83.

105 John, A. Burrow, *Medieval Writers and their Work: Middle English Literature 1100–1500* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 112.

106 Christopher. M. Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 2006), 35.

107 Albrecht Classen, "Naked Men in Medieval German Literature and Art: Anthropological, Cultural-Historical, and Mental-Historical Investigations," *Sexuality in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times: New Approaches to a Fundamental Cultural-Historical and Literary-Anthropological Theme*, ed. Albrecht Classen. *Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, 3 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 143–70; here 144.

108 Flannery, "The Concept of Shame" (see note 37), 174–75.

109 Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans IV*, trans. Philip Levine (London: W. Heine-mann; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), xiv, xvii.

pecially beloved of God (Col. 3:12). Scripturally nakedness also symbolized the leveling of humanity at death (Job 1:21, 7:21),¹¹⁰ and corpses during the medieval era were typically buried naked, wrapped only in a shroud. However, by the time when these CCMs were produced, prominent individuals such as royalty and ecclesiastics “were often buried in their ‘official’ robes with emblems of office.”¹¹¹ Thus the nakedness of the carved cadavers was highly symbolic, suggesting sinful humanity, mortality, and humility. The iconicity of them would have been powerfully encouraged the living to pray for the dead, reminding them of their own mortality and post-mortem fate.

It is highly unlikely however, that any of those wealthy enough to afford the extravagant CCM would have been buried naked, or would have died in such an anorexic state. A number of studies have highlighted the rich diets of the land-owning classes, and that high-ranking clerics were more likely to die of obesity-related diseases than emaciation.¹¹² It would therefore be incorrect to assume that these sculptures indicated verism, a form of realism in artistic representation.

Art historians have generally noted that, whilst by the late-fourteenth century images did include “precise references to the embodied form of individuals ...[,] this did not necessarily involve the naturalistic depiction.”¹¹³ Certainly, as Perkinson adds, whilst verism “entered the artistic vocabulary in the fourteenth century,” it was only as a supplement to “established representational conventions.”¹¹⁴ Without doubt these CCMs were more symbolic than veristic.

However, I suggest that several were designed to have an element of portraiture. The resurrection and cadaver visages of Hugh Asheton (d. 1522) at St. John’s College Chapel, Cambridge, bear a close similarity, and the height of both the resurrection effigy and carved cadaver of John Fitzalan (d. 1435) at Fitzalan Chapel, Arundel Castle, are identical (overall the forty-one carved cadavers vary in

110 Margaret Aston, “Death.” *Fifteenth-Century Attitudes: Perceptions of Society in Late Medieval England*, ed. Rosemary Horrox (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1994), 202–25; here 203, 223.

111 Richard Buckley, Matthew Morris, Jo Appleby, Turi King, Deidre O’Sullivan and Lin Foxhall, “‘The king in the car park’: New Light on the Death and Burial of Richard III in the Gray Friars Church, Leicester in 1485,” *Antiquity* 87 (2013): 519–38; here 534.

112 See, Gundala Muldner and Michael. P. Richards, “Fast or Feast: Reconstructing Diet in Later Medieval England by Stable Isotope Analysis,” *Journal of Archaeological Science* 32 (2005): 39–48, and Pip Patrick, *The ‘Obese Medieval Monk’: An Interdisciplinary Study of a Stereotype* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2014).

113 Stephen Perkinson, “Sculpting Identity,” *Set in Stone; the Face in Medieval Culture*, ed. Charles T. Little (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2006), 120–23; here 123.

114 Perkinson, “Sculpting Identity” (see note 113), 123.

length, and no two faces are identical). Further, several individuals are known to have commissioned their memorials whilst alive and spent time praying in their presence (Henry Chichele at Canterbury; John Baret at Bury St. Edmunds; Richard Willoughby at Wollaton; Alice de la Pole at Ewelme; Richard Fox at Winchester: Thomas Bennet at Salisbury). Doubtless, given the cost of these sculptures, these individuals would have expected some kind of resemblance. Perhaps in these commissioned carved cadavers, it could be that traces of genuine similarity exist. Only a few contemporary portraits of carved cadaver individuals are extant, but at least one strongly suggests verism; the CCM of Fox at Winchester Cathedral has the same facial structure as his ca. 1522 portrait by Johannes Corvus.¹¹⁵

Tracing contemporary material on the English and Welsh carved cadavers is not easy, for with the iconoclasm of the Reformation and the Civil War, much documentation was lost. However, although scholars have noted that Henry VIII's religious reforms caused the loss of many tombs,¹¹⁶ in regards to ECCMs, I argue that this was highly unlikely. Because they were memorials of individual naked people, and clearly human as opposed to suggestive of the divine, I strongly suspect they largely survived the iconoclasm of the Reformation by not being a "monument of superstition,"¹¹⁷ and therefore not standing in opposition to the reformed faith.¹¹⁸ Additionally, the information in the diary entries of the fervent iconoclast William Dowsing (1596–1668) suggests that they escaped the devastation of the Civil War.¹¹⁹

Between 1643 and 1644 Dowsing visited over two-hundred-and-fifty churches in Cambridgeshire and Suffolk. Included amongst these was a location that housed the tiered memorial to Hugh Asheton, at St John's College, Cambridge,

115 Oil painting of Richard Foxe by Johannes Corvus, ca.1522 in the collection of Corpus Christi College, Oxford.

116 Pamela, King, "'My image to be made all naked': Cadaver Tombs and the Commemoration of Women in Fifteenth-Century England," *Ricardian* 13 (2003): 294–314; here 295. Phillip Lindley, "'Disrespect for the Dead'? The Destruction of Tomb Monuments in Mid-Sixteen-Century England," *Church Monuments* 19 (2004): 53–79.

117 Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* (see note 9), 441.

118 David Davis, "Destructive Defiance: Catholic and Protestant Iconoclasm in England, 1550–1585," *Cromohs Virtual Seminars: Recent Historiographical Trends of the British Studies (17th–18th Centuries)*, ed. Marrio Caricchio and Giovanni Tarantino (2006–2007), 1–5. http://www.cromohs.unifi.it/seminari/davis_iconoclasm.html (last accessed on Jan. 29, 2015). See also Philip Lindley, *Tomb Destruction and Scholarship: Medieval Monuments in Early Modern England* (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2007).

119 Trevor Cooper, ed., *The Journal of William Dowsing: Iconoclasm in East Anglia during the English Civil War* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2001), 499.

where the undamaged *transi* tomb can still be viewed.¹²⁰ Further, whilst it is unclear whether Dowsing visited the Church of St. Vigor in Fulbourn, where the ECCM of John Car(e)way features as an Easter Sepulchre, “the balance of evidence...is for [his] iconoclasm” there.¹²¹ It would seem that Dowsing, who was specifically appointed to demolish “superstitious pictures and ornaments in churches,” and who took his role very seriously,¹²² thought CCMS were exempted from religious annihilation.

Spraggon, in her work on iconoclasm during the English Civil War, lists a number of cathedrals which were victims of iconoclasts. Yet Canterbury, Winchester, Wells, and Lichfield Cathedrals all retain their CCMS despite the fervor of those who wrought destruction on other memorials in these locations.¹²³ Lichfield Cathedral suffered particularly badly being besieged twice in 1643 and 1646.¹²⁴ Yet the tiered memorial to Dean Heywood at the Cathedral was left untouched: an engraving dated 1762–1798 stands as evidence of this.¹²⁵ At some later stage the impressive memorial and resurrection effigy were destroyed, and only the carved cadaver remains extant. It would appear then that something about these memorials set them apart from other statues and effigies, and I posit this was their depiction of a naked emaciated human form in three dimensions. Because of the iconicity of the sculptures, I argue, the strategy of incorporating stone body parts from CCMS into domestic structures seems highly improbable.¹²⁶

Some wooden CCMS may have rotted away over time, and the Great Fire of London (1666) could have destroyed both wooden and stone ECCMs in the city. Sweeping through central London, the fire destroyed St. Paul’s Cathedral and eighty-seven parish churches. It will never be known what was lost to the con-

120 Cooper, *The Journal of William Dowsing* (see note 119), 175–78, 470.

121 Cooper, *The Journal of William Dowsing* (see note 119), 43.

122 C. H. Evelyn White, *The Journal of William Dowsing of Stratford* (Ipswich: Pawsey and Hayes, 1885), 7. <https://archive.org/details/journalofdowsing00whituoft> (last accessed on Jan. 29, 2015). See also, Gordon Goodwin, “Dowsing, William,” *Dictionary of National Biography*, 15 (1885–1900) [http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Dowsing,_William_\(DNB00\)](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Dowsing,_William_(DNB00)) (last accessed on Jan. 29, 2015).

123 Julie Spraggon, *Puritan Iconoclasm during the English Civil War* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2003), 204–05.

124 Norman Ellis and Ian Atherton, “Griffith Higgs’s Account of the Sieges of and Iconoclasm at Lichfield Cathedral in 1643.” *Midland History* (2009): 233–45.

125 See “Lichfield Cathedral – Monument to Dean Heywood; engraving (c1762–1798)” <http://www.search.staffspastrack.org.uk/engine/resource/default.asp?resource=9054> (last accessed on Jan. 29, 2015).

126 Lindley *Tomb Destruction* (see note 118).

flagration. Outside the Roman city walls two ECCMs survived, one at Southwark of an anonymous cleric wealthy enough to afford such an elaborate memorial, and the carved cadaver of William Weston (d. 1540), prior of St. John of Jerusalem in England, now located in the crypt of the priory church of the Order of St. John, but originally in the Church of St. James, Clerkenwell.

It would appear then that iconoclasm is not responsible for the relatively small numbers of CCMs in Britain. However, the Victorian penchant for altering churches and cathedrals needs to be considered. Victorians did relocate and destroy existing funerary monuments when restoring (semi-) derelict ecclesiastical buildings.¹²⁷ However, my research indicates that the Victorians tended to relocate, rather than destroy ECCMS, and this can be demonstrated with the example of the very badly damaged CCM of Bishop John Alcock (d. 1500). Despite being in an extremely poor condition, the carved cadaver was retained in Alcock's chantry chapel when work was carried out on the cathedral in 1845, albeit placed on a window ledge rather than on his chest tomb; the sculpture remains on the window ledge and therefore out of the sight for the general public.¹²⁸

Further evidence of the Victorian penchant for relocating rather than destroying ECCMs comes from the memorial to Bishop Richard Fleming (d. 1431) in Lincoln Cathedral. Despite being currently a tiered or double-decker memorial and regularly described as such,¹²⁹ the original structure was somewhat different. Smith's 1805 description clearly states that on the outside of Fleming's chantry, in a raised canopy tomb, lay his ECCM, whilst inside but adjoining this, was his effigy "in his pontifical Robes."¹³⁰ This description is supported by a drawing of the memorial dated 1891, by Alice Gould, which illustrates the ECCM on the outside of Fleming's elaborately decorated chantry; the clothed effigy is ab-

127 Chris Brooks, "Introduction," *The Victorian Church: Architecture and Society* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 1–29; here 15.

128 Walter D. Sweeting, *Bell's Cathedrals: The Cathedral Church of Ely; History and Description of the Building with a Short Account of the Monastery and of the See* (London: George Bell & Son, 2007 [1910]) <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/21003/21003-h/21003-h.htm> (last accessed on Jan. 29, 2015).

129 See Julian Litten, *The English Way of Death; The Common Funeral since 1450* (London: Robert Hale, 1991), 62; and Derek Pearsall, *Gothic Europe 1200–1450* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), 224.

130 John Smith, *An Historical Account and Description of the Cathedral Church of St. Mary, Lincoln, with a Short Sketch of the Lives of the Bishops who have Presided over this Church* (Lincoln, 1805), 27. <https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=c5tYAAAACAAJ> (last accessed on Jan. 29, 2015).

sent.¹³¹ It would appear that, at some point between this date and 1902, the clothed effigy was moved to its current location, as a 1902 history of Lincoln Cathedral clearly locates it in its extant position.¹³² Notably, the chapel was renovated in the memory of antiquarian Sir Charles Anderson, Bart, 9th Baronet Anderson¹³³ (d. 1891), a Lincolnshire naturalist, antiquarian and “author of an entertaining pocket guide to the county.”¹³⁴ It is likely it was moved during this work in 1895 and the monument based on the tiered memorial to Archbishop Henry Chichele (d. 1443) at Canterbury Cathedral.¹³⁵

With evidence strongly suggesting that CCMs survived the iconoclasm of the Reformation and the Civil War, as well as the Victorian passion for restructuring churches, it would be reasonable to assert that barring those that perished in the Great Fire of London, the English and Welsh CCMs that are extant are highly likely to be all there were. They were a very high cost item, and despite the association of nakedness with debasement and humility, the juxtaposition between the social status of the individual memorialized and the actually naked sculpture lends them not only iconicity, but academic importance in terms of memorial sculpture. Rife with symbolism, I assert they were directly associated with the Roman Catholic belief in purgatory, the central tenet of after-life understandings of the time, and this I argue can be seen from the dates in which this very particular style of memorial was fashionable.

As noted, there are 41 extant CCMs in England and Wales, with 14 of unknown individuals (found at Tenby, Llandaff, St. Dogmaels, Frome, Stalbridge, Dursley, Hemingbrough, Southwark, Feniton, Keyston, and Paignton), and 2 of dubious provenance (at Tewkesbury, and Flamborough) and therefore not categorically datable; the York CCM is thought to be either Newton (d. 1414), or Haxey (d. 1425). However, of the remaining 27 datable CCMs, 23 span the reigns from King Henry VI (1422–1461) to Henry VIII (1509–1547),¹³⁶ and the remaining 3 appear in the reign of Queen Mary I (1553–1558). All of these were Roman Catholic

131 The drawing by Gould is at Lincoln Archive. I would like to thank Joan Pantton from Lincoln Cathedral for alerting me to the Gould drawing (10 July 2014).

132 Albert Kendrick, *The Cathedral Church of Lincoln, a History and Description of its Fabric and a List of the Bishops* (Edinburgh: Riverside Press, 1902), 128. <http://gwydir.demon.co.uk/PG/BellsLincoln/BellsLincoln.htm> (last accessed on Jan. 29, 2015).

133 See Daryl Lundy, *The Peerage* (2014): 12315 <http://www.thepeerage.com/p12315.htm> (last accessed on Jan. 29, 2015).

134 Kendrick, *The Cathedral Church of Lincoln* (see note 133), 128.

135 Cohen, *Metamorphosis* (see note 1), 67.

136 The York CCM would date from the reign of either King Henry V (1413–1422) or King Henry VI (1422–1461) depending on whether it memorialized Newton (d. 1414) or Haxey (d. 1425).

monarchs, even though Henry VIII broke with Rome in 1534.¹³⁷ The lack of memorials in King Edward's VI reign (1547–1553) is significant given that he was a Protestant monarch and under his reign purgatory (where one went after death to cleanse oneself of venial sins before being reunited with God) was effectively abolished.¹³⁸ Although Henry VIII effected much change to English religion, both the *Ten Articles* (1536), and *The Kings Book* (1543), whilst criticizing common people's excessive practice in relation to purgatory, noted that prayers for souls were "laudable."¹³⁹ Further, at his death in 1547, the Mass was said in Latin, prayers were said for his soul, and his funeral cortege was surrounded by banners of saints, including one for the Virgin Mary, a crucial saint in Roman Catholicism.¹⁴⁰ Additionally, Henry VIII's funeral service was conducted by the notable Roman Catholic bishop, Stephen Gardiner.¹⁴¹

The un-datable third of extant CCMs in England and Wales also need some consideration in terms of my positing the English and Welsh CCMs as Roman Catholic memorials. It is possible that some of the now anonymous CCMs could have been commissioned during the reign of King Edward VI, but given that none of the 27 dated CCMs fall within his reign, the probability that the un-datable CCMs follow a different pattern from the datable ones is fairly low. Indeed, according to Pearson's chi-squared test, it is statistically improbable.¹⁴² It is also unlikely that any of the un-datable CCMs pre-date or post-date the reigns of the previously mentioned monarchs, due to the crucial importance of Roman Catholic death and after-life beliefs, notably purgatory.

Purgatory was a concept central to late medieval Roman Catholic belief and was the place everyone, barring the sainted, went to purge their forgivable (venial) sins; once sin-free, they could expect to be united with God. Jacques Le

137 Although King Henry VIII broke with Rome in 1534, he continued to hear the Mass, and in effect remained Roman Catholic in his concern for his soul, and the soul of those he loved. See John J. Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII* (1969: New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 1997), 419.

138 Susan, W. Schmid, "Guilds, Religious," *Encyclopaedia of Tudor England*, ed. John. A. Wagner and W. Susan Schmid (Santa Barbara: ABC- Clio, 2012), 540–42; here 541.

139 Schmid, "Purgatory," *Encyclopaedia of Tudor England* (see note 138), 914–15; here 914.

140 Dylan Parry, 'A Macabre Tale of the Death and Burial of Henry VIII,' *Spero News* (1 February, 2012) <http://www.speroforum.com/a/KKFTBFRVLG30/67748-AmacabretaleofthedeathandburialofHenryVIII> (last accessed on Jan. 29, 2015).

141 Muller, *The Letters of Stephen Gardiner* (see note 88), xxxi.

142 Karl Pearson, "On the Criterion that a Given System of Deviations from the Probable in the Case of a Correlated System of Variables is such that it can be Reasonably Supposed to have Arisen from Random Sampling" *Philosophical Magazine Series 5* 50.302 (1900): 157–75; here 164–66.

Goff summarized purgatory as “a second chance to attain eternal life,”¹⁴³ as achieving eternal life at the end of one’s mortal existence was virtually impossible as humans were considered “mortal and weak,” sensuous beings constantly tempted to sin.¹⁴⁴ Defined in the Council of Lyons (1274), and the Council of Florence (1439), purgatory was a place of severe and painful sufferance. Time spent in purgatory varied according to the sinful nature of one’s soul, and certain acts conducted during one’s lifetime would give purgatorial remission, notably pilgrimages to named shrines, and the purchase of indulgences.

Indulgences were defined by the Catechism of the Catholic Church in 1471 as “a remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven ... an indulgence is partial or plenary according as it removes either part or all of the temporal punishment due to sin.”¹⁴⁵ In the fifteenth century up to one hundred days’ remission could be granted per indulgence. By 1471 purgatorial remissions for the dead were permissible,¹⁴⁶ and it is notable that cadaver memorials frequently requested prayers for the deceased in purgatory; for example, the inscription on the tiered cadaver memorial of Thomas Heywood (d. 1492) in Lichfield Cathedral reads (translated from Latin) “Whoever passes, stop, read. I am what you will be I was what you are. I beseech you, pray for me.”¹⁴⁷

Praying for the dead was crucially important in late medieval society. The establishment of chantry chapels commissioned by, or in remembrance of, the wealthy was hugely popular with hundreds established in England despite their relatively short history; emerging in the late-twelfth and early-thirteenth century and disappearing after the second Chantry Act of 1547.¹⁴⁸ It is notable that those who are known to have commissioned their carved cadaver memorials before they died took great pains to ensure they were prayed for after their deaths. The two Willoughbys at Wollaton, both with ECCMs, stand as testimony here. Richard Willoughby’s (d. 1471) memorial functioned as the church’s Easter

143 Jacques Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, trans. Arther Goldhammer (1981; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 5.

144 Jane, D. Douglass, *Justification in Late Medieval Preaching: A Study of John Geiler of Kiersberg*. Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought, 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 110.

145 Anon, “X. Indulgences” *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (2003); online at: http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_P4G.HTM (last accessed on Jan. 29, 2015).

146 George W. Barnard, *The Late Medieval English Church: Vitality and Vulnerability Before the Break with Rome* (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 2012), 141–142.

147 Peter Sherlock, *Monuments and Memory in Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 80.

148 Simon Roffey, *The Medieval Chantry Chapel: An Archaeology* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2007).

sepulcher, permanently reminding churchgoers to pray for him,¹⁴⁹ and his patronage was “concerned to encourage the entire parish to offer up prayers in his memory.”¹⁵⁰ On the outside north wall of the church t by the high altar was an inscribed stone plaque which, now missing the lower section of the inscription, originally would have requested prayers for him from passersby.¹⁵¹ His nephew Sir Henry Willoughby (d. 1548) made plans to fund religious properties “in exchange for trentals of mass for his soul.”¹⁵² Further, Sir Henry, as a Knight of the Sepulchre, had pilgrimaged to Santiago de Compostella in 1520–1521 and also to Rome where he purchased indulgences at both places and he also paid for a priest to sing at Wollaton for twenty years, and requested anyone wronged be recompensed.¹⁵³ Both Richard and Sir Henry Willoughby ensured that in life and after death, as much as possible was done to ensure their stay in purgatory was as short as they could make it.

John Baret, and Alice de la Pole, who both also commissioned their memorials whilst alive, were equally keen to ensure they were prayed for after their deaths. Baret commissioned an elaborate chantry, and willed that his chantry priest should say a prayer for Baret’s soul wherever he dined, thus ensuring fellow diners did the same.¹⁵⁴ De la Pole meanwhile established a chantry with her husband, and had two chantry priests, an attendant congregation of almsmen, and thirteen poor men pray for their souls.¹⁵⁵ Further, very shortly after the death of John Golafre, not only was his tiered CCM commissioned by the trustees of his estate, but a perpetual chantry was established to ensure his soul would be prayed for, and an almshouse for five poor men established; they too would pray for Golafre.¹⁵⁶ Indeed, all of the extant named CCMs are con-

149 Christina Welch, “Chopping and Changing: Exploring the Willoughby Carved Cadaver Memorials at St. Leonards Church, Wollaton, Nottinghamshire,” *Church Archaeology* (2015): in press.

150 Alixie Bovey, “The Wollaton Antiphonal: Kinship and Commemoration,” *The Wollaton Medieval Manuscripts: Texts, Owners and Readers*, ed. Ralph Hanna and Thorlac Turville-Petre. Manuscript Culture in the British Isles, 3 (Woodbridge, Suffolk: York Medieval Press, 2010), 30–40; here 39.

151 Welch, “Chopping and Changing” (see note 149).

152 Rob Lutton, “Vice, Virtue and Contemplation: The Willoughby’s Religious Books and Devotional Interests,” *The Wollaton Medieval Manuscripts* (see note 150), 68–78; here 76.

153 Alan Cameron, “Sir Henry Willoughby of Wollaton,” *Transactions of the Thoroton Society* 74 (1970): 10–21; here 19.

154 Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* (see note 9), 329.

155 Goodall, *God’s House* (see note 25), 142–43.

156 John, S. Roskell, Linda Clark and Carol Rawcliffe, “Golafre, John (d. 1442) of Fyfield, Berks” *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons, 1368–1421*. (Woodbridge: Boydell

nected with Chantries, and it is highly unlikely the remaining sculptures were unconnected with the practice of praying for the soul of the deceased in purgatory.

One reason why praying for the deceased in purgatory was, I argue, especially important, was the northern European vernacular belief in post-mortem sentience. There is evidence that in Northern Europe during the medieval and right through the early-modern period, that bodies were considered semi-sentient until skeletal, and this meant that the decomposing body could physically feel pain whilst in purgatory.¹⁵⁷

As Duffy notes, people in late medieval England were “well informed about what they might expect in purgatory.”¹⁵⁸ From vivid sermons to graphic visions and revelations, purgatorial punishments were described in visceral terms. An anonymous revelation of 1422 describes the vision of a nun from the Winchester *Nunnaminster*, who saw a fellow nun suffering in purgatory with “her skin rent and burning, [and] fire leaping from her mouth,”¹⁵⁹ whilst the fifteenth-century vision of Bridget of Sweden, widely circulated in England, describes how with one’s purgatorial punishment fitted one’s crimes. A recently deceased man guilty of “lies and pride” is seen by Bridget with his eyes hanging on his cheeks, his ears as if burnt with fire, his tongue hanging out, teeth smashed, his brain coming out of his nostrils, and with his body so broken his heart and bowels were visible.¹⁶⁰

Such explicit and corporeal accounts of purgatory worked alongside the reality of transubstantiation, which meant the literal taking of Jesus’ body and blood during the Eucharist.¹⁶¹ Further, stories of physical ghosts¹⁶² and revenants¹⁶³ added to this perception, and the normative experience of the deceased moving due to the process of bodily decomposition enhancing the fermentation

& Brewer, 1993) <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1386-1421/member/go-lafre-john-1442> (last accessed on Jan. 29, 2015).

157 Welch, “For Prayers and Pedagogy” (see note 7), 147–49.

158 Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* (see note 9), 338.

159 Edward, L. Ridsden, “‘A Revelation of Purgatory’ and Chaucer’s *The Prioress*,” *Fifteenth Century Studies* 35 (2010): 105–11; here 107.

160 Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* (see note 9), 339.

161 Sarah Stanbury, *The Visual Object of Desire in Late Medieval England*. The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 6.

162 Gwenfair, W. Adams, *Visions in Late Medieval England: Lay Spirituality and Sacred Glimpses of the Hidden Worlds of Faith* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007), 20, 52.

163 Nancy Caciola, “Wraiths, Revenants and Ritual in Medieval Culture,” *Past and Present* 152.1 (1996): 3–45.

of the beer/ale in people's stomachs.¹⁶⁴ As such the vernacular perception that the body suffered corporeally during the wet stage of death,¹⁶⁵ that is, the time during which the corpse decomposed and would be able to suffer physically in purgatory—was powerful, if theologically incorrect.

The link between physical pain and purgatorial punishment had a not inconsiderable history. During the medieval period, lepers, whose bodies visibly rotted, were considered to be living out their purgatorial punishments on earth.¹⁶⁶ Further, visceral images of purgatorial punishment could be found in the purgatory section of Dante's early fourteenth-century epic *Divine Comedy* (ca. 1308–1321). Illustrations from a fifteenth century edition depict the greedy and prodigal, bound by the hands and feet, forced to lay on their stomachs staring at the bare earth, whilst the arrogant are bent double by the weight of the huge rocks they must carry on their backs.¹⁶⁷ Similarly graphic illustrations illuminated the religious poem the *Desert of Religion* with one showing individuals burning in the fires of purgatory.¹⁶⁸ The notion that the soul's punishment in purgatory was sensory was clearly articulated in Aquinas's *Summa Theologica*:

all bodily sensation is from the soul, it follows of necessity that the soul feels the greatest pain when a hurt is inflicted on the soul itself. That the soul suffers pain from the bodily fire is at present taken for granted ... Therefore it follows that the pain of Purgatory, both of loss and of sense, surpasses all the pains of this life.¹⁶⁹

164 Due to the poor quality of water, small beer or ale was a dietary staple during much of medieval and early modern English history with the regular consumption of at least two pints daily; see Lyn, A. Martin, *Alcohol, Sex, and Gender in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), 18–21; here 18, 20). However, the average alcohol content was approximately only 1.2%; Jonathan Pereira *The Elements or Materia Medici and Therapeutics*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1843), 95. Martin notes though that people also regularly consumed stronger drink such as cider, wine and mead and thus the content of alcohol in the stomach of the deceased would typically have been high (see Martin, *Alcohol*, 33).

165 Robert Hertz, "A Contribution to the Study of the Collective Representation of Death," *Death, Mourning and Burial: A Cross-Cultural Reader*, ed. Antonius C. G. M. Robben (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 197–212.

166 Carol Rawcliffe, *Leprosy in Medieval England* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2006), 60–61.

167 Sergio Samek-Ludovici and Nino Ravenna, *Dante's Divine Comedy: 15th Century Manuscript*, trans. Peter J. Tallon (1965; Barcelona: Miller Books, 1979), 64, 76, 80.

168 The *Desert of Religion* and other poems and religious pieces can be found in the British Library Add. 37049 f.24v with the illustration available via British Library Images Online, ref ca. 13088–80.

169 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (Chicago: Henry Regnery & Co. 1953); supplement, appendix 1, Q2, article 1.

With purgatorial pain then commonly understood as visceral, the pedagogical reasons for the wealthy demonstrating their spiritual humility via sculpted emaciated representations of themselves is clear; in Matthew 19:24, the believer is informed that it is “easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.” Further, encouraging prayers from others was strongly encouraged. Praying for the dead was understood to reduce the deceased’s, and the praying person’s, purgatorial pains,¹⁷⁰ and as such CCMs acted as a win-win memorial, pedagogically demonstrating that sins in this life, and pains in the afterlife were connected, whilst encouraging prayers that would lessen these pains. The educational element of the sculptures can be seen in that they would have been prominently located in cathedrals and churches. The carved cadaver of Bishop Fox (d. 1528) in Winchester Cathedral would have been seen by visitors pilgrimaging to the popular shrine of important St. Swithun (destroyed in 1538), while the carved cadaver of Archbishop Richard Fleming (d. 1430) was located on the path that pilgrims would take after visiting the shrine of Hugh of Lincoln, whilst making their way to claim their dole. As previously noted Richard Willoughby’s CCM acted as the Easter Sepulchre, as did that of John Car(e)way (d. 1443) at Fulbourn.

Thus, although she is writing in a wider context, I suggest that Oosterwijk’s claim that cadaver monuments looked “forward beyond the actual moment of death to both bodily corruption and the Last Judgement”¹⁷¹ is only in part incorrect. I argue that they look not just to the Last Judgment after Resurrection, but to physical punishment in purgatory after particular judgment at death. This can be evidenced if one looks beyond the “I beseech you, pray for me,”¹⁷² to the other common designations on these memorials, “I was like you and you will be like me,” and “do good to all while you can.”¹⁷³

I argue then that the CCMs in England and Wales relate specifically to the Roman Catholic belief in purgatory. They speak to a time when the boundaries between the living and the dead were fuzzy, and when those in this-life and those in the after-life were bound together in an effort to minimize the pains of purgatory. With a strong vernacular perception, often supported by theological thought, that the body felt pain in purgatory, these CCMs would act didactically to encourage onlookers to lead as pious and as humble a life as possible, whilst encouraging prayers from the living that would aid both the memorialized individual in purgatory and the person praying when their time came.

170 Welch, “For Prayers and Pedagogy” (see note 7), 126.

171 Oosterwijk, ““This Worlde is but a Pilgrimage”” (see note 9), 201.

172 Cohen, *Metamorphosis* (see note 1), 45.

173 Cohen, *Metamorphosis* (see note 1), 45–46.

I also query the currently held beliefs that sculptures such as the late medieval English and Welsh CCMs show little verism. Indeed, my research indicates that elements of portraiture may have been more common than previously supposed. Additionally, the anatomical accuracy that the vast majority of these sculptures demonstrates implies that first-hand knowledge of the human body by the sculptors was highly likely; access to an emaciated body could well have been facilitated to highly skilled artisan via surgeons working in hospitals such as St. Thomas' Hospital in Southwark. It is certainly apparent from my close observations of the 41 CCMs in England and Wales, which have been carved by someone without good first-hand knowledge of the human form, and which have.

The need for close observation of the individual sculptures in any analysis of them is evident. Panofsky's sketchy and largely inaccurate description of CCMs in England exemplifies the need for first-hand research. Cohen too, although providing a much more nuanced approach to the subject of cadaver memorials, under-estimated their number and failed to differentiate substantially between the two- and three-dimensional examples in the *transi* genre; the difference lies in the anatomical representation of the individual, and the skill-sets that lie therein. Therefore I assert, there is a need for further research on the unusual three-dimensional carved cadaver memorial of England and Wales.

List of Carved Cadaver Memorials in England and Wales by Location

Location: England	Person memorialized	Double Decked (DD)/single (S)	Tonsure (T)/no tonsure (NT)	Other information
ARUNDEL CASTLE, FITZALAN CHAPEL	JOHN FITZALAN (d. 1435)	DD	NT	
BRISTOL CATHEDRAL	BISHOP PAUL BUSH (d. 1558)	S	T	Poor anatomically
BURY St. EDMUNDS, St. MARY'S CHURCH	JOHN BARET (d. ca.1463)	S	NT	
CAMBRIDGE, St. JOHN'S COLLEGE CHAPEL	HUGH ASHETON (d. 1522)	DD	T	
CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL	ARCHBISHOP HENRY CHICHELE (d. 1443)	DD	T	Erected ca.1423

Location: England	Person memorialized	Double Decked (DD)/sin- gle (S)	Tonsure (T)/no tonsure (NT)	Other information
CLERKENWELL, St. JAMES CHURCH PRIORY	SIR WILLIAM WESTON (d. 1541)	S	T	
DENSTON, CHURCH OF St. NICHOLAS	JOHN DENSTON (d. ca.1473)	S	NT	Wife also carved cadaver but fully covered in shroud cloth; memorial brasses of couple originally on tomb top
DURSLEY, CHURCH OF St. JAMES	UNIDENTIFIED	S	Head missing	
ELY CATHEDRAL	BISHOP JOHN ALCOCK (d. 1500)	S	Head missing	
EWELME, CHURCH OF CHURCH OF St. MARY THE VIRGIN	ALICE de la POLE (d. 1475)	DD	n/a	
EXETER CATHEDRAL	WILLIAM PARKHOUSE (d. 1540)	S	T	
EXETER CATHEDRAL	WILLIAM SYLKE (d. 1540)	S	T	Half size cadaver; missing legs
FENITON, St. ANDREW'S CHURCH	UNIDENTIFIED	S	NT	
FLAMBOROUGH, St. OS- WALD's CHURCH	SIR MARMADUKE CONSTABLE (the little) (d. 1530)	S	Head missing	Only torso extant; open chest cavity
FROME, CHURCH OF St. JOHN the BAPTIST	UNIDENTIFIED	S	NT	
FULBOURN, St. VIGOR CHURCH	JOHN CAREWAY (d. 1443)	S	T	Easter Sepulchre memorial
FYFIELD, PARISH CHURCH OF St. NICHOLAS	SIR JOHN GOLAFRE (d. 1442)	DD	NT	
HEMINGBROUGH, CHURCH OF St. MARY	UNIDENTIFIED	S	NT	
HOLME, CHURCH OF St. GILES	JOHN BARTON (d. 1491)	S	NT	

Location: England	Person memorialized	Double Decked (DD)/single (S)	Tonsure (T)/no tonsure (NT)	Other information
KEYSTON, CHURCH OF St. JOHN the BAPTIST	UNIDENTIFIED	S	T	Wooden; half size; eviscerated
LICHFIELD CATHEDRAL	DEAN THOMAS HEYWOOD (d. 1492)	S	T	Originally DD
LINCOLN CATHEDRAL	BISHOP RICHARD FLEMING (d. 1430)	DD	T	
PAIGNTON, CHURCH OF St. ANDREW'S and St. BONIFACE	UNIDENTIFIED	S	T	Badly damaged
SALISBURY CATHEDRAL	PRECENTOR THOMAS BENNET (d. 1558)	S	T	In place by 1554
SALISBURY CATHEDRAL	GEORGE SYDENHAM (d. 1524)	S	T	
SOUTHWARK CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF St. SAVIOUR	UNIDENTIFIED	S	T	
STALBRIDGE, CHURCH OF St. MARY	UNIDENTIFIED	S	NT	Poor anatomically
TEWKESBURY ABBEY	JOHN WAKEMAN (d. 1530)	S	T	Creep-crawlie covered; provenance contested
TIDESWELL, CHURCH OF St. JOHN the BAPTIST	SIR SAMSON MEVERILL (d. 1462)	S	NT	
TOWCESTER, CHURCH OF St. LAWENCE	ARCHBISHOP WILLIAM SPONNE (d. 1447)	S	NT	Wooden head and hands on upper effigy
WELLS CATHEDRAL	BISHOP THOMAS BEKINGTON (d. ca.1450)	DD	T	
WESTBURY, HOLY TRINITY CHURCH	JOHN CARPENTER (d. 1476)	S	T	
WINCHESTER CATHEDRAL	BISHOP RICHARD FOX (d. 1528)	S	T	In place by 1513
WINCHESTER CATHEDRAL	BISHOP STEPHEN GARDINER (d. 1555)	S	T	

Location: England	Person memorialized	Double Decked (DD)/single (S)	Tonsure (T)/no tonsure (NT)	Other information
WOLLATON, CHURCH OF St. LEONARD	SIR HENRY WILLOUGHBY (d. 1528)	DD	NT	Effigy with 4 half sized wives; CCM swapped with Richard Willoughby
WOLLATON, CHURCH OF St. LEONARD	RICHARD WILLOUGHBY (d. 1471)	S	NT	Easter Sepulchre memorial; memorial brasses of couple on tomb top; CCM swapped with Henry Willoughby
WORSBOROUGH, CHURCH of St. MARY'S	SIR ROGER ROCKLEY (d. ca.1524 or 1533)	DD	NT	Wooden; open chest cavity with intestines inaccurately sculpted
YORK MINSTER	DEAN THOMAS HAXEY (d. 1425)	S	T	Possibly CCM of JOHN NEWTON (d. 1414)
Location: Wales	Person memorialized	Double Decked (DD) / single (S)	Tonsure (T) / no tonsure (NT)	Other information
LLANDAFF CATHEDRAL	UNIDENTIFIED	S	NT	Missing legs
ST. DOGMAELS, TOURIST CENTRE	UNIDENTIFIED	S	NT	Poor anatomically
TENBY, St. MARY'S CHURCH	UNIDENTIFIED	S	T	

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Images of Mortality in Early English Drama

The iconic image of mortality in early English drama, and perhaps in all of world drama, appears in the final act of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1600). Returning to the stage after an absence of three scenes, Hamlet strikes up a conversation with the "clown" who is digging Ophelia's grave. The gravedigger raises a skull that, he says, "has lain in the earth three and twenty years," adding: "This same skull, sir, was Yorick's skull, the King's jester" (5.1.174–81).¹ Hamlet begins a reverie on "poor Yorick" to which I shall return. For the moment I should note that the skull, as a synecdoche of the human skeleton, is the great *memento mori* of late medieval and early modern art, including the figures in popular emblem books. The skull "has no voice of its own," as one scholar observes, "but manages to speak to us about our mortality through the emblem, figured as a resonant echo from beyond the grave."²

This chapter will focus on the representation of death in late medieval and early modern England, with the understanding that there were similar developments throughout Western Europe. It starts with the first plays for which texts survive and some of the oral tradition and ritual behind those plays. It shows how the tradition was continually reshaped over the two hundred years (approximately) separating the earliest surviving texts and the Elizabethan and Jacobean dramas they anticipate. From Christopher Marlowe's reworking of medieval motifs in *Doctor Faustus* (1592), the essay will turn to several other plays by Shakespeare (1564–1616), including *Hamlet* with the iconic skull of Yorick and, finally, to revenge tragedies in the manner of *Hamlet*.

¹ Shakespeare's plays are quoted from *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans, Harry Levin, Herschel Baker, et al. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974); citations refer to act, scene, and line numbers. Dates given for first performances are conjectural, but reflect current scholarship as found, for example, in Andrew Dickson, *The Rough Guide to Shakespeare* (London: Penguin, 2005).

² William E. Engel, *Death and Drama in Renaissance England: Shades of Memory* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 18. Engel cites George Wither's 1635 *Collection of Emblemes, Ancient and Moderne*.

I. The Dance of Death

English drama may be said to have originated in the ritual observance of death, though whether the ritual occurred inside or outside of Christianity and the Church remains a matter of debate. The first written evidence is of dramatic performances within the drama of the Catholic Mass. In what is perhaps the earliest instance, Ethelwold, the tenth-century Bishop of Winchester, left directions for a small drama during the Easter service. While the Gospel text is read, three Benedictine monks, representing the women coming to the tomb of Jesus, are to approach the sepulcher in the cathedral. A fourth monk, representing the angel at the tomb, is to sing the *Quem quaeritis*, asking whom they seek. The three answer in unison, “Jesus of Nazareth.” Then, while the angel sings the good news and the choir adds its Hallelujahs, the three lift the cloth from the sepulcher and hold it up to show the clergy that Christ is risen.³

Other dramas associated with the liturgical year in England show strong signs of pre-Christian origins. The Mummers’ plays traditionally performed on Christmas Eve, at Whitsunday, and before other festivals tell the story of St. George slaying a dragon or sometimes a Saracen. They are told in pantomime—the name “mummer,” which means actor, is derived from the Old French word for “mime” (*momeur*)—and they were often performed in a house-to-house procession. Although understood as an allegory of Christ’s victory over death, they seem to have more to do with the death of the old year and the birth of the new. Frazer found numerous example of mummers’ plays and St. George plays associated with the cycle of the seasons, including the May pole dance, not only in the British isles but throughout Europe.⁴ Frazer does not connect them with the *Dance of Death* found throughout northern Europe, but he does make the connection with the ceremony of “Carrying out Death,” marking the arrival of spring or summer.⁵

There seem to have been various Dances of Death, both celebrating life and warning observers what is to come.⁶ In England, dancers might dress as skele-

³ E. K. Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1903), vol. 2, 9–15; discussed in Allardyce Nicoll, *British Drama: An Historical Survey from the Beginnings to the Present Time*, 4th ed. (1925; London: Harrap, 1947), 21–22.

⁴ James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study of Magic and Religion* (London: Macmillan, 1922), 126–27, 296–301, 633.

⁵ Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (see note 4), 307–16.

⁶ On the *Dance macabre* tradition, see Hiram Kümper’s entry on “Death” in *The Handbook of Medieval Culture: Fundamental Aspects and Conditions of the European Middle Ages*, ed. Albrecht Classen, 3 vols. (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2015), vol. 1, 314–28.

tons or carry spears and other life-threatening weapons, or they might circle a person posing as a corpse, adding the occasional kick or kiss.⁷ Sometimes they would pose as famous dead people, as if to answer the question *Ubi sunt qui ante nos fuerunt* ? (Where are those who were before us?). The dancing might be alcohol fueled, like the dancing at an Irish wake, or frenetic, like the St. Vitus Dances on the Continent. It may not have taken much direction from the Church; indeed, some English priests railed against the practice.⁸ However, it certainly inspired religious art. In Paris, the cemetery attached to the Church of the Holy Innocents (Église des Saints-Innocents) had a series of frescoes painted in about 1425, to which French verses were soon added, describing the *Danse macabre*.⁹ In London, a leading citizen paid to have replicas painted in a new cloister on the north side of Saint Paul's Cathedral, "with English verses to explaine the painting translated out of French by *John Lydgate*, a monk of Saint Edmund's Bury."¹⁰ The ensemble was described as "a picture of death leading all estates," that is, people of all social stations.¹¹ Though it was removed after England became an officially Protestant country, a memory of it may have survived in a broadside of 1569. In "The Daunce and Song of Death" the figure of Death leads king, beggar, and old man alike, wise man and fool. One verse reads:

Come daunce this trace ye people all,
Both Prince and Beggar I say:
Ye old, yong, wyse, and fooles, I call,
To graue come take your way.

7 See James M. Clark, *The Dance of Death in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*. Glasgow University Publications, 86 (Glasgow: Jackson, 1950).

8 *The Danse of Death, Edited from MSS. Ellesmere 26/A.13 and B. M. Lansdowne 699, Collated with the Other Extant MSS*, ed. Florence Warren and Beatrice White, Early English Text Society, 181 (London: Oxford University Press, 1931), xiv–xv. For further speculation on the origin of the Dance of Death during the Black Death of the fourteenth century, see Léonard P. Kurtz, *The Dance of Death and the Macabre Spirit in European Literature* (1934; Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1975), 15–16.

9 Jean Gerson (attrib.), *La Danse macabre des Saints Innocents de Paris, d'après l'édition de 1484: précédée d'une étude sur le cimetière, le charnier et la fresque peinte en 1425*, ed. Valentin Dufour (1874; Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1975). Kurtz, *The Dance of Death* (see note 7), 28, suggests the attribution to Gerson started with this study. Scott Taylor, who discusses Gerson in his contribution to this volume, assures me that the attribution is extremely unlikely.

10 William Dugdale, *The History of Saint Pauls Cathedral in London* (London: Thomas Warren, 1658), 131–32. Lydgate's translation appears on pp. 289–96.

11 *Ancient Funerall Monuments within the United Monarchie of Great Britain* (London: Tho. Harper, 1631), 378.

For sicknes pipes thereto
By griefes and panges of wo.¹²

The figure of Death as a leader, pulling people out of their complacency and requiring them to face the inevitable future, appears in the oldest of the English morality plays. In *The Castle of Perseverance*, which dates from 1450, Humanum Genus or Mankynd decides that he cannot forsake his worldly goods and will therefore have to abandon hope of entering Heaven. At this point, a character called Mors or Death enters and scares the life out of him, saying:

Drery is my deth-drawth;
Ageyns me may no man stonde.
I durke and downbrynge to nowth
Lordys and ladys in euery londe.

[Dreadful is my death-dart;
Against me no man may stand;
I lurk and bring down to naught
Lords and ladies in every land.]¹³

Mors needs to say no more, nor does he, for he exits never to return. Mankynd is now desperate, realizing: “Ded is my destiny” (87; 2844). He calls for help, to Mundus (World) first of all, but he gets no assistance until four daughters of God appear, representing Truth, Mercy, Righteousness, and Peace. They plead Mankynd’s cause before God the Father, who relents in the end, saying that he has always loved his wayward son.

Death, again as Mors, makes a very different appearance in *The Death of Herod*, a somewhat earlier play about the Christian mystery. This much shorter play—little more than an interlude—is part of the Corpus Christi cycle performed annually in an English market town once thought to have been Coventry. Herod the Great (Herodes rex) appears at the opening, presumably to hisses from the audience:

12 *The Daunce and Song of Death* (London: Jay Awdely, 1569); woodcut with letterpress verses in cartouches.

13 *The Macro Plays: The Castle of Perseverance, Wisdom, Mankind*, ed. Mark Eccles. Early English Text Society, 262 (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 1–111; here 85, lines 2791–94. Page and line references for text are to this edition. Modernizations here and elsewhere are mine unless indicated otherwise. Much useful information on the plays discussed in this section can be found in the Records Early English Drama database (reed.utoronto.ca), last accessed Sept. 27, 2014.

Now am I sett at mete
 & wurthely servyd at my degre
 Com forth knyghtys sytt down & ete
 & be as mery as ye kan be.¹⁴

[Now I sit at the table,
 served according to my degree;
 Come forth, knights, sit down to eat,
 and be as merry as you can be.]

Unbeknownst to Herod, the knights at the table include a bailiff (*ius miles*) and Mors, who announces himself to the audience:

I am deth goddys masangere
 All myghty god hath sent me here
 yon lordeyn to Sle with-owtyn dwere
 ffor his wykkyd werkyng. (174)

[I am Death, God's messenger.
 Almighty God hath sent me here
 yonder lord to slay without a question
 for his wicked works.]

Mors plays the role of prosecutor and judge, saying: "I xal hem make to me but thrall / with my spere sle hem I xall, and so cast down his pride" (175; 49–50: "I shall make him a thrall to me; with my spear I shall slay him / and so cast down his pride"). Herod realizes that he is dead meat, but before the bailiff can haul him away, there is a great trumpeting. Diabolos, the Devil, appears with two of his henchman, saying, "þis catel is myn" (176; 79: "This catiff is mine"). Death is reduced to being another dead person, telling people to beware of "pompe & pryde" (176; 92) and reflecting on Herod's fate, which is the fate of all mortals:

Now is he as pore as I
 wormys mete is his body
 his sowle in helle ful peynfully
 of develis is al to-torn. (177)

[Now he is a poor as I,
 his body is worms' meat,

14 "The Death of Herod," *Ludus Coventriæ Or The Plaie called Corpus Christi*, Cotton MS. *Vespasian D. VIII*, ed. K. S. Block. Early English Text Society, 120 (London: Oxford University Press, 1922), 174–77; here 174.

his soul in Hell is torn
by devils, painfully.]

We are back here to the dances where Death is represented by one of the countless worm-eaten dead.

The best-known of all medieval English plays is that of *Everyman* (late 1400s). Like the earlier and longer *Castle of Perseverance*, it is a morality play. Everyman must separate himself from the deadly sins before he can die a good death. But whereas Mankynnd in the earlier play spoke of death in general before Death itself appeared, Everyman is approached by Death at the beginning. Indeed, the author called his play *The Summoning of Everyman*, as is explained in the opening speech:

I Pray you all gyue your audyence
And here this mater with reuerence
By fygure a morall playe
The somonyng of euery mā called it is
That of our lyues and endynge shewes
How transytory we be all daye.¹⁵

[I pray you all give your attention
and hear this story with reverence
in the form of a moral play.
It is called *The Summoning of Every man*
and shows our lives and their ending,
how transitory are all our days.]

Early editions use the manuscript's incipit:

Here begynneth a treatyse how ye hye fader of heuen sendeth dethe to somon euery creature to come and gyue a counte of theyr lyues in this worlde / and is in maner of a morall playe.

[Here begins a treatise showing how the father of Heaven sends Death to summon every creature to come and give account of their lives in this world. It is written in the style of a moral play.]

God is the first character to appear, lamenting that people “vse the seuen deedly synes dampnable” (a2v). God summons Death and instructs him:

¹⁵ *Everyman*, 3rd ed. (London: John Skot, ca. 1528), A2r. Signature numbers in the text refer to this edition, which was printed in sexto. An earlier edition lacking a title page was printed by Rychard Pynson ca. 1515.

Go thou to euery man
 And shewe hym in my name
 A pylgrymage he must on hym take
 Whiche he in no wyse may escape
 And that he brynge with hym a sure rekenynge
 Without delay or ony taryenge. (A3r)

[Go in my name to Everyman
 and in my name tell him
 he must take a pilgrimage
 without delay or tarrying;
 he cannot escape it
 and he must bring a true account.]

Death is not the Grim Reaper, but a simple messenger of God—an angel, if you will, in the word’s etymological sense of messenger.¹⁶ The woodcut on the title page of the edition cited earlier shows death as a skeleton draped in a simple cloak with cap and knee breeches, standing amid bones outside the entrance to the underworld, and pointing the direction in which Everyman walks. Everyman, meanwhile, is dressed in the finery of a London merchant, but he is looking over his shoulder in the direction from which he has come (Fig. 1). He tells Death, “Full vnredy I am suche rekenynge to gyue” (a3v: “I am not at all ready to give such a reckoning”), and hopes against hope that he can put off the journey at least until the morrow or, failing that, return to see his friends.

When Death makes it clear “this is the daye / That no man lyuynge may scape away” (A3v: “This is the day / that no living person can escape”), and then leaves the stage, Everyman spends most of the remaining moments—and the play continues for another eight hundred lines—seeking companions for the journey. He finds that only Good Dedes and Knowledge (i.e., of Christian doctrine) can be of any use. There is no need for judgment, as there is in *The Castle of Perseverance*, for Everyman’s misspent life has been thoroughly reviewed, and he has seen the futility of relying on his false friends and relatives, or on his strength and worldly goods. A teacher (Doctor) appears at the end—perhaps the same person who spoke at the beginning—to bring home the message. He reminds members of the audience, “olde and yonge,” to “forsake pryde” and the things one takes pride in. “For after dethe amendes may no man make / For

¹⁶ The word “reaper” was applied to death in Shakespeare’s lifetime; however, the term ‘grim reaper’ appeared only in the nineteenth century; see *The Oxford English Dictionary Online*, “grim” adjective and adverb, additions, and “reaper” noun, 2b, www.oed.com (last accessed on Oct. 1, 2014).

than mercy and pyte doth hym forsake" (C4r: "For no man can make amends after death / when mercy and pity forsake him").

Everyman is the best-known of the medieval morality plays and rightly so; however, it is atypical in its representation of Death. No longer a threatening adversary, armed with a spear or darts like Mors in *The Castle of Perseverance* or bearing a brief for the prosecution like Mors in *The Death of Herod*, Death has become a simple messenger, reminding mortals that their bodies cannot endure and must return to dust. The real foe, the one that pushes Mors aside in *The Death of Herod*, is the Devil, compared to whom Mors is just another deceased, worm-eaten body. Death does *Everyman* a good service by prompting him to prepare for judgment, the judgment all mortals must face. Once his message to *Everyman* is delivered, he leaves the stage. *Everyman* then faces a cast of characters, representing all that is good and bad in human nature. They are not exactly the Deadly Sins and Christian virtues, but the message is clear enough. God will judge every man, and every woman too, but they can repent of their sins and prepare to die a good death.

II. Staged by the Devil

Biblical plays, concerning miracles of the saints as well as Bible stories and moralities, were written and staged well into the sixteenth century. One of the last was written by a poet named John Redford (d. 1547). He was not a priest, but a professional musician. As the organist and choirmaster of St. Paul's Cathedral in London, he composed poetry as well as keyboard music and anthems.¹⁷ He also wrote entertainment pieces for the court of Henry VIII, including secular masques and the didactic play *Wit and Science*. Probably performed by boys from St. Paul's School, including the Choir School that he supervised,¹⁸ it was a morality without the character of Death. Its focus was marriage, and it was first published as an interlude concerning "the mariage of Witte and Science."¹⁹ The premise, no doubt developed in lines before the surviving text or manuscript

17 John Caldwell, "Redford, John (ca. 1500–1547)," *Dictionary of National Biography*, www.oxforddnb.com (last accessed on Oct. 1, 2014).

18 Victor I. Sherb, "Playing at Maturity in John Redford's *Wit and Science*," *Studies in English Literature 1500–1900* 45.2 (2005): 271–97.

19 [John Redford], *A new and Pleasaunt enterlude intituled the mariage of Witte and Science* (London: Thomas Marsh, 1570). The longer title may allude to Martianus Capella's allegorical poem *De Nuptis Philologiae et Mercurii* (On the Marriage of Philology and Mercury), written in the fifth century CE.

begins, is that Wit wants to marry Science, but must first find and woo the lady. Where the text begins, the godlike figure of Reason hands his son Wit a looking glass so that he can clearly see himself and others in the bright light of reason. After saying, “thys glas of reason shall show ye all,”²⁰ Reason tells Instruction to help the youth; however, Wit, being closer to sense perception than to cleverness, looks for Science in all the wrong places. He ends up with Idleness rather than Honest Recreation, and with the “drab science” of loose women rather than the Science of his dreams. He is horrified when he finally looks in the mirror:

am I so fowle as those drabs wold make me
 where is my glas that reson dyd take me?
 now shall this glas of reson soone trye me
 as fayre as those drabs that so doth belye me.
 hah / gogs sowle / what have we here a dyvyll
 this glas I se well hath bene kept evyll [badly] ...²¹

[Am I as foul as those harlots make me?
 Where is the looking glass that reason gave me?
 This glass of reason will soon test me,
 As surely as those harlots belie me.
 Hah! By God's soul, we have a devil here.
 I see this mirror has been cared for badly.]

He wonders if the glass does not need cleaning, rather than himself. But when he holds it up to the audience, he sees beautiful people. He realizes that he has become “a very asse” and must reform before he finds his ideal. A modern commentator writes: “when Wit holds his glass of Reason up to the audience, he more than involves its members in the play; he also forces his observers to acknowledge their own roles as both interpreters and presenters of images, both living and painted, within as well as outside of dramatic contexts.”²² Reason's mirror thus serves as a *memento mori*, a reminder that what we see in the looking glass must be understood in the light of reason, which tells us that the mortal body must die.

The mirror, like the clock, is a physical representation of something otherwise hidden from one: one's face in the mirror, time on the clock. Mirrors are also distorting. We get the reverse image or a more serious distortion; the mirror can divine the truth, or lead us astray. As St. Paul writes, we mortals see “through

²⁰ John Redford, *Wit and Science* (London: Malone Society, 1951), 1.

²¹ Redford, *Wit and Science* (see note 20), 33.

²² Hillary Nunn, “‘It lak’th but life’: Redford’s *Wit and Science*, Anne of Cleves, and the Politics of Interpretation,” *Comparative Drama* 32.2 (1999): 270–91; here 271.

a glass darkly,” that is, enigmatically, by means of a mirror (*per speculum in aenigmate*).²³ Francis Bacon (1561–1626), the English essayist and proponent of reform in learning, wrote that “the mind of Man is farre from the Nature of a cleare and equall glasse, wherein the beames of things should reflect according to their true incidence; Nay, it is rather like an enchanted glasse, full of superstition and Imposture, if it bee not deliuered and reduced.”²⁴ A fine example of “undelivered” mind, struggling to distinguish truth from superstition, is the hero of a play by Christopher Marlowe (1564–1593), based on the German *Historia Dr. Johann Fausten* from 1587.²⁵

In *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*,²⁶ Marlowe turned a legendary character into a model of Renaissance humanism. Marlowe’s Faustus has the endless curiosity of earlier scholars from Italy, Germany, and other countries. Given the option to gain supremacy in the academic world at the price of his soul, he hardly thinks twice, so obvious a choice does it seem. His willingness to sell his soul actually horrifies the Devil’s servant, Mephistophilis, who exclaims: “O Faustus, leave these frivolous demands, / Which strike a terror to my fainting soul!” (1.3.81–82).²⁷ Unconvinced that he even has a soul, Faustus replies, “Had I as many souls as there be stars, / I’d give them all for Mephistophilis. / By him I’ll be great emperor of the world” (1.3.101–03). He says this because, in the words of the Prologue, he is “swoln with cunning of, a self-conceit” (Prologue 20), that is, consumed with pride based on his considerable learning. He is

23 1 Corinthians 13: 12. For a Jungian perspective, see the entry on mirrors in Ami Ronnberg, ed., *The Book of Symbols: Reflections on Archetypal Images* (Cologne: Taschen, 2010), 590–93.

24 Francis Bacon, *Of the Proficience and Aduancement of Learning, Diuine and Humane* (London: Henry Tomes, 1605), 55. See the discussion of images and imagination in Katherine Parks, “Bacon’s ‘Enchanted Glass,’” *Isis* 75.2 (1984): 290–302.

25 Albrecht Classen, *The German Volksbuch: A Critical History of a Llate-Medieval Genre*. Studies in German Language and Literature, 15 (Lewiston, Queenston, and Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1995), 213–43.

26 First staged in 1594, the year after Marlowe’s death in a tavern brawl, the play was printed without act or scene divisions as Ch. Marl., *The Tragicall History of D. Faustus* (London: Thomas Bushell, 1604). This so-called A text was reissued with act and scene divisions, and with new lines adding a more Christian message, as Ch. Marlowe, *The History of the Tragical Life and Death of Doctor Faustus* (London: John Wright, 1616), the so-called B text. Unless otherwise indicated, quotations are taken from the A text, and lines are numbered as found in Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus: A 1604-Version Edition*, ed. Michael Keefer (Peterborough, ON: Broadview, 1991).

27 Marlowe’s spelling Mephistophilis is a variant spelling of Mephistopheles, a demon found in German folklore and the *Fausbuch* in particular. For further background, see Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Mephistopheles: The Devil in the Modern World* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986).

the archetypal overreacher,²⁸ rising higher than any of his peers, and falling all the harder. Accosted by a Good Angel, in a manner reminiscent of *The Castle of Perseverance*, he nevertheless listens to his Evil Angel. Yet he has his moment of buyer's remorse, after signing his name in blood, when he listens for once to his Good Angel and cries, "Ah, Christ, my saviour, / Seek to save distressed Faustus' soul" (2.3.84–85). At this point, Lucifer himself appears to close the deal, saying, "Christ cannot save thy soul, for he is just. / There's none but I have interest in the same" (2.3.86–87). Lucifer frightens Faustus into submission and the devils reward him with a "pastime" in which "all the Seven Deadly sins appear in their proper shape" (2.3.102–04).

Noticeably different from morality plays that Marlowe could have seen as a child in Canterbury, the pastime is pure slapstick, each sin rivalling the others for sheer silliness. Pride begins the show: "I am Pride. I disdain to have any parents. I am like to Ovid's flea, I can creep into every corner of a wench: sometimes like a periwig I sit upon her brow; next like a necklace I hang then, turning myself to a wrought smock, do what I list" (2.3.112–16).²⁹ "Pride goeth before destruction," says the proverb, "and an haughty spirit before a fall."³⁰ Just as pride led to the fall of Lucifer from Heaven, so it led Faustus to aspire well above his humble origins, "his parents base of stock" (Prologue 11), to become "sole king" of Germany (1.1.95) and even to become "a deity" on the assumption that "A sound magician is a mighty god" (1.1.63–64). He is also given the sin of lechery, desiring to "live in all voluptuousness" (1.3.92); and he has a weakness for the special kind of sloth known as *accidia* or *accidie*, a sort of apathy that could make one insensitive to the claims of religion.³¹ In the anonymous German *Faustbuch* (1587) from which Marlowe took his plot, "Faustus fell into despayre with himselfe."³² In Marlowe's play, Faustus tells himself he must "despair and die" (5.1.48). Even at the end of his rather comical career as a magician, when young scholars advise him to repent, he insists that "Faustus' offense can ne'er be pardoned" (5.2.14). Explaining that "the devil threatened to tear me to pieces if I named God," he advises them: "Talk not of me, but save yourselves" (5.2.42–

²⁸ See Harry Levin, *The Overreacher: A Study of Christopher Marlowe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954).

²⁹ The reference is to the "Elegia de pulice," a medieval poem in imitation of Ovid. John Donne's poem "The Flea" is based on the same text.

³⁰ Proverbs 16: 18 (King James Version).

³¹ *Oxford English Dictionary*, "accidie" noun.

³² *The Historie of the Damnable Life and Deserved Death of Doctor John Faustus*, trans. P. F. (London: Edward White, 1592), 63; for a critical discussion of the German original, see Albrecht Classen, *The German Volksbuch*, 1995 (see note 25), 213–43.

43, 47). Alone at the midnight hour, he cannot help himself. He calls on God to have mercy on him and limit his suffering (5.2.91–93). He promises to give up his studies, licit and illicit, and his last words are, “I’ll burn my books, ah Mephastophilis” (5.2.115). But he is too late; devils carry him off, and in a speech appended to the 1616 text, a scholar finds “Faustus’ limbs / All torn asunder by the hand of death.”³³ As in *The Death of Herod*, the death of an evil man involves more devils than that of most mortals.

Faustus dies what was called a “bad death” because, like the worst students, he bargains for extra time—“a year, / A month, a week, a natural day” (5.2.64–65)—when he could repent and prepare for a good death.³⁴ The point is brought home by a character called “an Old Man” who enters abruptly as the scholars leave and urges Faustus to ask for mercy. Described in the Faust book that Marlowe follows as “A Good Christian” and the doctor’s “neighbour,”³⁵ the Old Man says:

I see an angel hovers o’er thy head,
And with a vial full of precious grace,
Offers to pour the same into thy soul:
Then call for mercy, and avoid despair. (5.1.53–56)

Though Faustus calls the Old Man “my sweet friend” (5.1.57), he soon appeals to “Sweet Mephastophilis” when Lucifer’s right-hand man appears to threaten him for his momentary wavering (5.1.70). Faustus even asks that devils torment the Old Man when he dies, but the answer he gets points to the real difference between the two men: “His faith is great,” says Mephistophilis, “I cannot touch his soul” (5.1.79). The Old Man has faith in God’s mercy, and though he exits with devils, he says confidently, “My faith, vile hell, shall triumph over thee” (5.1.116). Meanwhile Faust reenlists with the devils, signing a new contract in his own blood.³⁶

Marlowe’s play is a nearly complete reversal of the old morality plays. Instead of being summoned to prepare for death, like Mankynd and Everyman, Faustus summons the devil. He even dictates the terms under which he will

³³ B text 5.3.6–7; from Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus* (see note 25), 146.

³⁴ For a theoretical discussion of different types of death as perceived in the premodern world, see the contribution to this volume by Katharina Baier and Werner Schäfke who draw on the theoretical concepts developed by Hans-Peter Hasenfratz (2006).

³⁵ *Doctor John Faustus* (see note 31), 67.

³⁶ Michael Neil suggests argues the play lacks any sense of closure and leaves Faustus and the audience with “a gathering horror of no-end”; *Mortality and Identity in English Renaissance Tragedy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 207.

yield his soul in due course. Knowing that he must die, makes frivolous choices; indeed, he asks no serious questions after he has signed away his soul, but seems to rest on his academic laurels and his new fame as a magician.³⁷ Again, he is unlike Everyman or Mankynd, each of whom learns from experience that only faith and good works can save them. Faustus lacks faith in the Christian mystery—faith which was much more of an issue after the Reformation. In the opening monologue, he picks up “Jerome’s Bible” and reads: “*Stipendium peccati mors est*,” exclaiming, “Ha! *Stipendium*, &c. / ‘The reward of sin is death?’ That’s hard” (1.1.38–40). Early audiences would most likely have noticed that he skips the second half of the verse: “*Gratia autem Dei, via aeterna, in Christo Iesu Domino nostro*” (“but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord”).³⁸ Even before conjuring the devil, he has said, “Divinity, adieu!” (1.1.49), and has adopted a diabolic theology of predestination. Were it not for his “self-conceit,” he would be unlikely to think he had committed an unpardonable sin.

Although Mephistophelis, as Lucifer’s representative, serves as the counterpart of Death in the morality plays, there is really no need for such a character. Death is a nearly constant presence, absent only from comic scenes that point up the silliness of the Devil and his bargain with Faustus. The word “death” and its cognates “dead” and “die” appear several dozen times. Productions make ample use of stage props associated with death and the passage of time; Richard Burton’s filmed version features a skull, an hourglass, and a mirror in the first scene alone.³⁹ With the rise of Senecan tragedy—and especially of revenge tragedies like Shakespeare’s *Titus Andronicus* (1594), which appeared on the London stage shortly after *Doctor Faustus*—the body count on stage rose to the point that Death was hardly needed.⁴⁰ The very title of plays like *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar* (performed in 1599) and *The Revenger’s Tragedy* (performed in 1606) left no doubt that death was to be expected. The best known play of this sort, Shakespeare’s *Tragedy of Hamlet Prince of Denmark* (published in 1602, but performed a year or two earlier), is not entirely typical given the protagonist’s famous delay;

37 Theodore Spencer suggests that Marlowe downplays Faustus’ accomplishments to emphasize that they become insignificant in comparison to his endangered soul; *Death and Elizabethan Tragedy: A Study of Convention and Opinion in the Elizabethan Drama* (New York: Pageant Books, 1960), 229–30.

38 Romans 6: 23 (Vulgate; King James Version).

39 Richard Burton, dir., *Doctor Faustus* (Oxford University Screen Productions; Columbia Pictures, 1967).

40 On the conventions of this sub-genre, see John Kerrigan, *Revenge Tragedy: Aeschylus to Armageddon* (Oxford and New York: Clarendon Press, 1996).

however, it is based on the older *Spanish Tragedy* of Thomas Kyd (published in 1592 and acted in the previous decade) and perhaps on an earlier *Hamlet* by Shakespeare himself.

III. Remembering Death

Hamlet begins as a play about a murder that must be avenged. The ghost of Hamlet's father appears with news that he was murdered by his own brother. "If thou hast nature in thee bear it not," he tells Hamlet, adding some further advice: "Taint not thy mind" (1.5.85). So far, so good. When the ghost exits, saying, "Hamlet, remember me" (1.5.91), the prince sounds perfectly resolute:

Remember thee!
Yea, from the table of my memory,
I'll wipe away all trivial fond records,
All saws of books, all formes, all presures past,
That youth and observation copied there,
And thy commandment all alone shall live
Within the booke and volume of my braine. (1.5.97–103)

The image of memory as a writing tablet or written book is appropriate to a student, and to a society which, like Elizabethan England, was keeping tabs on any threats to the state. Unlike his warrior father, however, Hamlet is a scholar and a thinker. He is like Faustus in that respect. As such he sees complications that would never have occurred to a man of action like Othello. He worries:

The spirit that I have seen
May be a devil, and the devil hath power
T'assume a pleasing shape, yea and perhaps,
Out of my weaknesse, and my melancholly,
As he is very potent with such spirits,
Abuses me to damn me. (2.2.598–603)

In order to make sure that the ghost is honest and the uncle guilty, Hamlet stages a play. But when he is certain of his uncle's guilt, he declines to act. Finding the murderer at prayer, he does not want him to die with the benefit that his father lacked, and go to Heaven while his father suffers in Purgatory. That would be an act of mercy, he opines, "not revenge" (3.3.79; see 1.5.74–79).

Hamlet's graveyard reflection on death features the most famous *memento mori* in all of English literature: Yorick's skull. The clowning gravedigger who identifies Yorick says that he took up "Adam's profession" on "that very day

that young Hamlet was born" (5.1.31, 147), another reminder of Hamlet's mortality; from this we soon learn that Hamlet is thirty years of age (1.5.162) and was seven when Yorick died. The prince muses: "Here hung those lips that I have kiss'd I know not how oft." Then he addresses the skull with the *ubi sunt?* question: "Where be your gibes now? your gambols? your songs? your flashes of merriment that were wont to set the table on a roar?" (1.5.188–91). Yorick was Hamlet's mentor in jest and thus in madness. Yorick has no replacement in the totalitarian court of Denmark under the murderous Claudius, where the only good jester is a dead one and the only clown is the gravedigger. From his reflections on Yorick, Hamlet moves quickly to the great men of antiquity, Alexander and Caesar, and concludes that they too must have "come to dust."⁴¹ No sooner has he had this reminder of his own mortality than Claudius enters with the funeral procession of Ophelia. Hamlet is drawn into the events that lead inevitably to his death and theirs. In the end, murder is avenged, and not only the murder of old Hamlet. Hamlet's contemporary Laertes avenges the deaths of his father and sister, both of which he blames on his rival, young Hamlet.

Revenge is only half of the matter, though. Honor is the other, writes Martin Lings, who investigates the esoteric side of Shakespeare's art. "No revenge, no honor: for men of understanding, the subhuman plight of fallen man is a state of global dishonor."⁴² For this global perspective, there is truth in the rumor about old Hamlet's demise. The ghost tells young Hamlet:

Tis given out that, sleeping in my orchard,
A serpent stung me; so the whole ear of Denmark
Is by a forged process of my death
Rankly abused: but know, thou noble youth,
The serpent that did sting thy father's life
Now wears his crown. (1.5.35–40)

The crime of Claudius, as reported to Hamlet, is a re-enactment of the original sin, in which mankind became a mortal being. Much has been made of Hamlet's having an Oedipus complex, or of Freud's having a Hamlet complex.⁴³ Whether or not Hamlet envies Claudius, or shares his desire to murder the old king and marry his queen, is a matter of interpretation. More clearly, Hamlet is caught up in the Judaeo-Christian struggle of good and evil. The young idealist seems

⁴¹ See Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, 4.2.264.

⁴² Martin Lings, *The Sacred Art of Shakespeare*, 2nd ed. (1984; Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 1998), 21.

⁴³ Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (New York: Riverside, 1999).

to ask, “What good is a world with evil in it?” Even before encountering the ghost, he laments:

How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world!
Fie on't, ah fie! 'tis an unweeded garden,
That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature
Possess it merely. (1.2.133–37)

He is not the only one to recognize that “something is rotten in the state of Denmark” (1.4.90), but he is peculiarly charged to repair things. After encountering the ghost, he says to his comrades: “The time is out of joint: O cursed spite, / That ever I was born to set it right!” (1.5.189–90). By the time he has assured himself of Claudius’ guilt, Hamlet clearly thinks of his uncle as a devil. Confronting his mother, he asks: “What devil was’t / That hath thus cozened you?” (3.4.76–77). The implied answer is Claudius. By killing Claudius, Hamlet will symbolically kill the Devil, the old enemy of mankind.

Death as a character, that is, as an antagonist, enters Shakespeare’s plays only through the device of personification. An interesting example appears in *The Tragedy of Richard II* (performed in 1595), when the ineffectual and self-pitying Richard silences his counsellors and launches into a long monologue on “the death of kings.” His predecessors were “all murdered,” he insists, whether slain in battle, poisoned by their wives, or killed in their sleep. He continues:

All murdered—for within the hollow crown
That rounds the mortal temples of a king,
Keeps Death his court, and there the antic sits,
Scoffing his state and grinning at his pomp,
Allowing him a breath, a little scene,
To monarchize, be fear’d, and kill with looks,
Infusing him with selfe and vain conceit,
As if this flesh which walls about our life,
Were brass impregnable; and humo’d thus,
Comes at the last and with a little pin
Bores through his castle wall, and farewell king! (3.2.160–70)

Death plays the role of the antic, or jester, in a metaphorical court that meets inside the king’s head. Death humors the king, allowing him to enjoy the pomp of office and giving him time to think he is invulnerable. But in the end, Death rules; it takes only a pin prick to break through the king’s weak defenses. Richard does his best to prepare himself for death. The dead kings whose images

flock through his mind have been compared to the dancers who represent the famous dead in the *ubi sunt* version of the Dance of Death.⁴⁴ But Shakespeare has a further lesson about death that his comic heroes and heroines learn as rapidly as their tragic counterparts.

One of Shakespeare's last comedies, *Measure for Measure* (1603–1604), provides a good view of his perspective on death—a perspective also found, more briefly, in the major tragedies and late romances. *Measure for Measure* is sometimes regarded as a morality play,⁴⁵ and though it covers much more than the medieval plays discussed earlier, it has speeches with strong medieval themes. Posing as a friar, the Duke of Vienna advises a condemned man named Claudio to accept the inevitability of death, rather than keep hoping for release. His speech (3.1.5–41) is a miniature treatise on the art of dying (*ars moriendi*), and it produces the desired effect on Claudio, who says, “I find I seek to die; / And seeking death, find life” (3.1.42–43), meaning of course the life of the world to come. He naturally has difficulty living by these thoughts and confesses to his sister that no pain or suffering in this life compares to the “fear of death,” which is basically fear of the unknown. His speech to her (3.1.117–30), every bit as powerful as the duke's, is a great example of poetry on the medieval *topos* of contempt for the world (*de contemptu mundi*).

The duke later explains to Claudio's sister: “That life is better life, past fearing death, / Than that which lives to fear” (5.1.397–98). Once a person has accepted death, he or she is ready to live life to its full. Thus Edgar in *King Lear* (1605) tells his suicidal father, who intended to leap to his death, “Thy life's a miracle” (4.6.55). He does not lie, not because the old man has been miraculously saved after jumping off a small hill rather than the cliffs of Dover, but because, having faced death, he has arrived at a position to see that all life is miraculous. Edgar refers to the state of living in the moment as “ripeness,” saying that death must be endured in the same way as birth:

Men must endure
Their going forth, even as their coming hither,
Ripeness is all. (5.2.9–11)

⁴⁴ Phoebe S. Spinrad, *The Summons of Death on the Medieval and Renaissance English Stage* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1987), 110–11.

⁴⁵ Lings, *The Sacred Art of Shakespeare* (see note 40). For the influence of morality plays on Shakespeare, see Stephen Greenblatt, *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare* (New York: Norton, 2004), 33–36.

Hamlet calls this state “readiness,” saying, “the readiness is all. Since no man, of aught he leaves, knows what is’t to leave betimes, let be” (5.2.223–24). No one knows what it would mean to die before reaching old age; therefore, one should stop worrying and be always ready to die.

There is a convention in Shakespeare that when characters are brought back on the stage after others think they have died, their reappearance is a miracle or mystery. So it is with Hero in *Much Ado about Nothing* (1598–1599), thought to have died of a broken heart; with Viola in *Twelfth Night* (1602 or earlier), thought by her twin brother to have died in a shipwreck; with Claudio in *Measure for Measure*, thought to have been hastily executed on the order of a fearful and corrupt official; with Hermione in *The Winter’s Tale* (1611 or earlier), assumed by her jealous husband to have been long dead and gone; and by almost everyone in *The Tempest* (1611), assumed to have died in one shipwreck or another, but seen through the fresh eyes of Miranda as “beauteous mankind” (5.1.182).

IV. Jacobean Horrors

Hamlet is not the only one to hold a skull, as an acute critic of English drama has remarked. “The English Renaissance is becoming contemplative, and its contemplation was led more and more, like Hamlet’s, to death.”⁴⁶ What followed in early seventeenth-century drama was at once more violent and more stylized. It would be hard to get more violent than *The Revenger’s Tragedy* (1607), by Thomas Middleton (1580–1627), a play so violent that its title is assigned to one of the final missions in the *Grand Theft Auto IV* video game.⁴⁷ In the opening scene, the character Vendici (i.e., Vengeance) enters carrying the skull of his poisoned fiancée and accosts the poisoner, beginning, “Duke: royall lecher; goe, gray hayrde adultery ...”⁴⁸ He then turns to the skull and says:

Thou sallow picture of my poisoned love
My studies ornament, thou shell of Death,
Once the bright face of my betrothed lady.

⁴⁶ Spencer, *Death and Elizabethan Tragedy* (see note 35), 235.

⁴⁷ Dan Houser and Rupert Humphries (writers), *Grand Theft Auto IV* (Rockstar Games, 2004).

⁴⁸ Thomas Middleton, *The Revengers Tragedie* (London: G. Elds, 1607), unpaginated (1). Long attributed to Cyril Tournear, who may have collaborated on it, the play is now said to be largely the work of Middleton.

Before long, Vendici is walking about with a “tire” on the skull (i.e., a wig or headdress) and showing it off to the duke’s concubine. Of course he kills the duke in the end, and is marched off to his death, saying, “We die after a new of Dukes adue [adieu].”⁴⁹ Meanwhile, *The Duchess of Malfi* (1612–1613), by the playwright John Webster (ca. 1580–ca. 1634), has a Dance of Death calculated to drive the duchess to distraction and the grave. Her own brother, ostensibly to help her recover from her bout of melancholy, sends a flock of “mad-men” to her. As the servant says:

There’s a mad Lawyer, and a secular Priest,
A Doctor that hath forfeited his wits
By jealousie: an Astrologian,
That in his workes, sayd such a day o’t’h’moneth,
Should be the day of doome; and fayling of’t,
Ran mad: an English Taylor, crais’d i’t’h’braine,
With the studdy of new fashion: a gentleman vsher
Quite beside himselfe, with care to keepe in minde,
The number of his Ladies salutations;
Or how do you, she employ’d him in each morning:
A Farmer too, (an excellent knave in graine)
Mad, “cause he was hindred transportation,
And let one Broaker, (that’s mad) loose to these,
Youl’d thinke the divell were among them.⁵⁰

The devil is among them only in so far as their madness is thought to have a spiritual origin, either in the devil’s temptation or as God’s punishment. Madness is also a social phenomenon, reaching across all classes from the learned professions (lawyer, priest, physician) to the urban trades (merchant tailor, financial broker) and services (doorman or usher, farmer). One man sings, “*to a dismall kind of Musique*,” while four others boast and jabber. The “yerkosome noyce” has the desired effect (4.2.59, 66). The duchess is glad to depart such a world.

V. Coda

It would be wrong to conclude that the disappearance of Death as a figure on the English stage indicates anything like a growing secularism in English society.

⁴⁹ Middleton, *The Revengers Tragedy* (see note 48), 70.

⁵⁰ John Webster, *The Tragedy of the Dutchesse of Malfy* (London: John Waterson, 1623), sig. 14r; 4.2.44–57.

True enough, the Elizabethan and Jacobean dramas discussed above were all performed in secular settings: at court, or the Inns of Court, or at country houses as well as at the new public theaters. Performances met with the same opposition from the pulpit that the *Dances of Death* had met in earlier centuries, though the opposition now came largely from the more Puritanical preachers. Public theaters were closed by act of Parliament in 1642, the year when the English Revolution began; they reopened only after the restoration of the monarchy, and the Church of England with it, in 1660.

Arguably, death was as much on the minds of Englishmen and women in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as it had been during the late Middle Ages. Outbreaks of bubonic plague continued in England until the middle of the eighteenth century, and even with the advance of civic precautions, the Great Plague of 1666 decimated the population to almost the same extent as the first outbreak more than three hundred years earlier. Few people did not know families touched by plague. London with its large population and poor sanitation was especially hard hit, and its theaters were regularly closed in plague years. Like the nearby brothels, they were perceived to be places of dangerous contagion. In *Romeo and Juliet* (1595–1596), probably written during a plague year, Shakespeare referred to “the infectious pestilence” that quarantined a messenger from Verona and prevented Romeo from learning the truth about Juliet’s supposed death (5.2.10).

In the seventeenth century, as in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the threat of death led to thoughts about religion. Playwrights of the English Renaissance discovered that they could raise religious issues without directly arousing the ire of Christians in their audience by setting stories in pre-Christian times or in alternate worlds with recognizably pagan settings. For example, *King Lear* is set in pre-Christian time, *Macbeth* (1606) features the witch lore of Scotland, and *The Tempest*, despite its contemporary setting, features only the deities of Roman mythology. Though death looms over every character in the play, the closest thing to a personified figure of death is the classical harpy, as acted by the spirit Ariel. Similarly, in Shakespeare’s first revenge tragedy, *Titus Andronicus*, the eponymous hero is a Roman general. After his victories over the Goths are horribly avenged on his family, his mortal enemy takes the role of Revenge, a Roman goddess equivalent to the Greek Nemesis (5.1.30), believing him to have gone mad. If she “calls herself Revenge,” he tells her sons, “I will be revenged: And now prepare your throats,” which he then cuts before baking them in a pie for her (5.2.186, 196). For his unfortunate adversaries, he is nothing short of a Roman representation of Death. Scholars have noted a similarity to the avenging Fury in Seneca’s tragedy *Thyestes*.

When characters in the drama “present” the old gods, as Ariel says he does (4.1.167), they take on a secondary, allegorical quality. In the same way, Portia in *The Merchant of Venice* (1596–1597) and the Duke of Vienna in *Measure for Measure* take on the allegorical quality of mercy, and so become descendants of the character of Mercy in the late morality play of *Mankind* (ca. 1470), who, like the Doctor in *Everyman*, instructs the audience at the play’s beginning and end.

In a much-cited chapter of his *Poetics*, Aristotle discusses the “reversal of fortune” (*peripetia*) as the change “from one state of things within the play to its opposite.” He notes that it often accompanies a recognition (*anagnorisis*) of the true state of things and that these two may lead to suffering (*pathos*).⁵¹ To take a simple example, we may note that, in *Macbeth*, the protagonist’s recognition that he is not invulnerable, despite the witches’ apparent promises, coincides with a sudden reversal of his fortunes, leading to his death. In plays like *Measure for Measure*, the process is more complicated: recognition that an apparently executed man remains alive leads to a reversal of fortune for those who have been condemned to die in retribution for his death.⁵² In a longer study, we might trace the reversal of fortune back to the appearance of the Daughters of God in *The Castle of Perseverance* or of Good Dedes and Knowledge in *Everyman*. The marvel of these early English dramas is that Death, or at least its worst consequence, is escaped through illumination of one kind or another, whether by divine aid in medieval drama or human counsel in plays like *Measure for Measure*. And having experienced the reversal of fortune, the characters come to realize that death is more friend than foe, and that their lives are more meaningful while they last.

51 Aristotle, “Poetics,” trans. I. Bywater, *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. Johathan Barnes, 2 vols. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), vol. 2, 2316–40; here 2333.

52 For the reversals of action, time, and reality in Shakespeare’s late comedies, see Northrop Frye, *The Myth of Deliverance: Reflections on Shakespeare’s Problem Comedies* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983).

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New Perspectives of the Early Modern Afterlife: The Last Pilgrimage in the Poetry of John Donne and Sir Walter Raleigh

The last pilgrimage as a way of depicting the passage from this life into the next is a recurring trope among writers in early modern England.¹ Best known in this regard is probably John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1679/1684) featuring the Everyman figure Christian, his spiritual adventures on the pilgrimage to the Celestial City, and his successfully crossing the River of Death together with his companion Hopeful.² Bunyan's bestseller, and particularly the journey on which the two pilgrims cast off "their *Mortal* Garments," is indebted to many different earlier precedents in the literary works of the English Renaissance.³ In this paper, I will focus on two of these and argue for their strong met-

1 I am indebted to Albrecht Classen, Christina Ljungberg, Allen Reddick, Fabian Schambron, Thomas Willard, and Florence A. Zufferey as well as to the participants of the symposium *Death and the Culture of Death in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Time* (May 2015, The University of Arizona, Tucson) for their valuable criticism that helped to improve this article at various stages. Original spellings have been retained; old letter forms and abbreviations have been silently adapted and expanded, respectively. Unless otherwise noted, early printed books have been accessed through *Early English Books Online*. The research for this paper was supported by grant no. FK-14-059 from the "Forschungskredit" of the University of Zurich.

2 John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, 1678/1684, ed. Cynthia Wall (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 2009), 121–22. For a literary study that focuses on the this-worldly aspect of the pilgrimage in early modern England rather than on the metaphorical implications of its end, see Grace Tiffany, *Love's Pilgrimage: The Holy Journey in English Renaissance Literature* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2006).

3 Among others, I am thinking of works like Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (1590/1596) and shorter poems by George Herbert, John Donne, and Sir Walter Raleigh. On another note, Watson argues that the question of "the proper path to the afterlife" was only a means of psychological distraction from the possibility that there might be "no destination" at all. This view is based on Watson's overall argument that the English Renaissance witnessed an unprecedented crisis of death mainly due to "the lack of any purgatorial process" and due to Protestantism's "particular emphasis on individual interiority" and on its inherent sinfulness that "must have made it virtually impossible to imagine satisfactorily the survival of a full selfhood in heaven." Even though historians think that this is exaggerated, many concur on the "eschatological uncertainties" that some of the old/new Protestant doctrines unleashed. Thus, even if death's "nihilitic sting," as Watson calls it, is an exaggeration, I would argue that the metaphorical pilgrimage projects a conceit that professes to transcend linguistically these ontological anxieties to explore new, hopeful meanings of the life to come. See Robert N. Watson, *The*

aphorical potential of opening up new perspectives of the early modern afterlife. To do so, I will first consider one of John Donne's *Holy Sonnets* that offers a condensed but deep insight into the ruminations of a person at the point of death. On the "last mile" of the speaker's earthly pilgrimage his sins are cast to hell, entitling his soul to leave behind the world, the flesh, and the devil, so that he may rejoin—in a typically Donnean twist—a fully purified body in heaven. For a contrast to Donne's sonnet, I will turn to "The Passionate mans Pilgrimage," a poem usually attributed to Sir Walter Raleigh, in which the speaker-convict envisions his own execution, his ensuing pilgrimage to a heavenly court of justice, and his assurance of Christ's atonement. All of this gives him the opportunity to criticize fiercely the worldly authorities whom he holds responsible for his earthly fate.

I will contend that, even though these two poems are very different in tone, scope, and end, the common metaphor of the last pilgrimage reveals new meanings of after-worldly being. Via the last pilgrimage, Donne's poem invites the reader into a dying person's most inner thoughts, subtly alluding to the post-mortem reunion of his body and soul. The poem attributed to Raleigh, on the other hand, uses the trope for a political cause, namely, to denounce those earthly authorities responsible for the speaker's death sentence by opening up a new perspective on heavenly justice.

Prior to the analysis of the two poems, a few historical and theoretical aspects need to be addressed.⁴ Historically, the idea of the pilgrimage as a metaphorical journey through life is not an invention of the English Renaissance. The trope can be traced as far back as to the Old Testament narratives of a chosen people on their quest for the land of milk and honey. This quest is appropriated in the New Testament, particularly in Hebrews 11, where humans in this

Rest Is Silence: Death as Annihilation in the English Renaissance (Berkeley, Los Angeles, et al.: University of California Press, 1994), 6, 40; Peter Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), especially 215; Ralph A. Houllbrooke, *Death, Religion, and the Family in England, 1480–1750* (Oxford, New York, et al.: Clarendon Press, 1998); David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

⁴ While medievalists have amply covered the pilgrimage trope, much of the same work remains to be done for the early modern period, particularly in regard to the eschatological implications of this metaphor. A list of seminal studies on the topic includes but is not limited to Jonathan Sumption, *Pilgrimage: An Image of Mediaeval Religion* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1976); Victor Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978); Dee Dyas, *Pilgrimage in Medieval English Literature, 700–1500* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2001); Marco Nievergelt, *Allegorical Quests from Deguileville to Spenser* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2012).

world are described as strangers and pilgrims in a foreign country headed for the eternal city which God has prepared for them.⁵ Throughout the period of the early Christian Church and the Middle Ages, the concept of the “life pilgrimage” with its ultimately eschatological goal (perhaps best known in Dante’s *Divina Commedia*) was retained despite the rising popularity of the “place pilgrimage”—a medieval practice that today seems much more prevalent in our heads than its metaphorical precedent.⁶

In the wake of the (English) Reformation, the abolition of the place pilgrimage for reasons of charges against idolatry may well have led to a re-emphasis of the arduous pilgrimage through life as a conceit for the this-worldly toils and their after-worldly obliteration. Hence, the metaphorical pilgrimage provided believers not only with an experiential model of mapping their spiritual progress but also with a way of putting life and death into perspective: upon the close of his earthly life, the stranger-pilgrim is bound to take his last journey to his heavenly home.⁷ In this connection, the pilgrimage trope was also used by early modern divines pastorally to palliate the prospects of death, a fact to which a number of church historians refer cursorily and to which sermons and other devotional writings by Erasmus of Rotterdam, John Calvin, Thomas Becon, and others bear explicit testimony.⁸ All these aspects—the biblical ori-

5 See Hebrews 11:13–16. The rendering of “strangers and pilgrims” may seem inaccurate in light of the Greek original ξένοι καὶ παρεπίδημοί. However, this phrase has its own history of reception in English bible translations: it goes back to the Wycliffite Bible, translated on the basis of Jerome’s Vulgate (“peregrini et hospites”) rather than the Greek original. A similar passage can also be found two chapters later in Hebrews 13:14. For the history of reception, see Philip Edwards, *Pilgrimage and Literary Tradition* (Cambridge, New York, et al.: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 5–6.

6 Dee Dyas, *Pilgrimage in Medieval English Literature, 700–1500* (see note 4), 9–65. To differentiate between the metaphorical pilgrimage through life and the literal pilgrimage to a particular shrine, Dyas has coined the terms “life pilgrimage” and “place pilgrimage,” respectively. Moreover, it deserves emphasis that the idea of an interior pilgrimage had never disappeared entirely and was retained particularly in medieval mysticism, while the idea of a literal pilgrimage was never without criticism; see Victor Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture* (see note 4), 7; Giles Constable, “Opposition to Pilgrimage in the Middle Ages,” *Studia Gratiana* 19 (1976): 121–46.

7 On the experiential mode of the Protestant narrative, see Neil H. Keeble’s work on itinerancy, particularly his essay, “‘To be a pilgrim’: Constructing the Protestant Life in Early Modern England,” *Pilgrimage: The English Experience from Becket to Bunyan*, ed. Colin Morris and Peter Roberts (Cambridge, New York, et al.: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 238–56.

8 Ralph A. Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion, and the Family* (see note 3), 65; Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead* (see note 3), 309.

gins, the medieval practice of place pilgrimage, the Protestant model for spiritual progress, and the palliative implications of early modern pastoral care—need to be kept in mind when further approaching the core of the matter.

The Pilgrimage Metaphor in Theory

My research is based on the theoretical premise that the end of the metaphorical pilgrimage functions as a conceit to negotiate the tension between soteriology and eschatology, two dogmatic disciplines theorized in systematic theology. In the most simple terms, soteriology adumbrates the earthly ways in which God grants salvation to humanity, while the doctrine of eschatology is ultimately concerned with the “last things,” that is, the after-worldly consequences of God’s salutary acts (heaven, hell, resurrection, last judgment) in both individual and collective terms.⁹ In spite of the New Testament’s insistence on the Good News and the eventual salvation of mankind, the tension between the redemption through the figure of Jesus Christ and its effectual fulfillment remains unresolved until the end of times. This is a dogmatic tension that has not ceased to exist for Christians of any epoch. For the present inquiry, it can be said that the pilgrimage trope conceptualizes this tension metaphorically: the life pilgrimage is a soteriological model that sketches the metaphorical steps in this life, and its end inevitably anticipates an eschatological conclusion. Hence, the *last* pilgrimage is the immediate bridge between soteriology and eschatology, between this life and the one to come.

While I do not intend to make a completely new contribution to what Paul Ricœur calls the “boundless field of metaphor theory,” my literary analysis relies on some of the most central insights that have been put forward by theorists of metaphor.¹⁰ In his reading of Aristotle’s *Poetics*, David Punter paraphrases that through the special capacity of a metaphor the reader is cast into “the presence of something unusual, something outside language’s normal ambit, and this can serve to deepen the reader’s experience, to bring a suddenly enriched apprehension of the world.”¹¹ How this metaphorical enrichment is exploited can be further explained by turning to Ricœur: by borrowing the Fregean distinction be-

⁹ Rochus Leonhardt, *Grundinformation Dogmatik*, 3rd ed. (2001; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 310, 388; see p. 390 for the difference between individual and collective eschatology.

¹⁰ Paul Ricœur, “The Metaphorical Process as Cognition, Imagination, and Feeling,” *Critical Inquiry* 5.1 (1978): 143–59; here 143.

¹¹ David Punter, *Metaphor*. The New Critical Idiom (London: Routledge, 2007), 13.

tween the sense (German *Sinn*), “the immanent design of discourse,” and its reference (German *Bedeutung*), “the intentional direction towards a world,” Ricœur presents a tension theory according to which “a previously unnoticed ‘proximity’ of two ideas is perceived despite their logical distance.”¹²

This new correlation between the *sense* of a metaphorical statement and its *reference* gives rise to a “semantic innovation,” as Ricœur calls it, a term that becomes helpful when theorizing death through the end of the earthly pilgrimage: while, to believers in early modern England, the *literal sense* of the end of a pilgrimage may just have referred to the medieval place-pilgrim reaching his shrine, the *metaphorical reference*, I argue, achieves an unprecedented semantic proximity between life and death, leading to “a new vision of reality to which ordinary language [...] stands in opposition.”¹³ Put differently, the meaning of that which cannot be expressed literally, that is death itself, is suspended through the use of figurative language, a kind of language capable not only of putting life and death into a metaphorical relationship and of thereby providing “tropological consolation,” but also of entering literary works through poetic innovation and exploration.¹⁴

Although the two dogmatic disciplines of soteriology and eschatology are theoretically not congruent with the literal sense and the metaphorical reference, I contend that there is a certain parallel, for both soteriology and Ricœur’s literal sense share an aspect of immanence, while eschatology and his metaphorical reference both transcend this-worldly life and language. This linguistic relationship of religious metaphors has been further enunciated by Hans Weder, a New Testament theologian whose research is closely associated with Ricœur’s. Weder maintains that a religious metaphor has a “hermeneutical potential” insofar as it “can be defined as combining a transcendent subject with an immanent predi-

12 Paul Ricœur, “Metaphor and the Main Problem of Hermeneutics,” *New Literary History* 6.1 (1974): 95–110; here 100; Paul Ricœur, *The Rule of Metaphor: The Creation of Meaning in Language*, 1975, 1977, trans. Robert Czerny with Kathleen McLaughlin and John Costello (London: Routledge, 2004), 4. Also, see Paul Ricœur, “Stellung und Funktion der Metapher in der biblischen Sprache,” *Metapher: Zur Hermeneutik religiöser Sprache*, ed. Paul Ricœur and Eberhard Jüngel (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1974), 48. In other theories of metaphor, these “two ideas” are often referred to as subject and predicate or tenor and vehicle, respectively.

13 Ricœur, “Stellung und Funktion der Metapher,” (see note 12), 51 (my translation).

14 That metaphorical language is able “to provide tropological consolation” has been established in at least one literary study, see Karen Elizabeth Smythe, *Figuring Grief: Gallant, Munro, and the Poetics of Elegy* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1992), 13. The close relationship between figurative and poetic language is already delineated in Aristotle’s *Poetics* and a commonly accepted premise in Ricœur’s thought, which is why I desist from explaining it in further detail here.

cate,” while balancing an insurmountable difference between the worldly and the divine, or between this life and the next, for that matter.¹⁵ It is precisely within this arena of the here and now and the hereafter that the trope of the last pilgrimage can open up new perspectives for the life to come through the literary use of metaphor as I will demonstrate below.

The Pilgrimage Metaphor in Early Modern Theology

While it was not possible for early modern believers to draw from Ricoeur or Weder for insights on a life-transcending metaphor, they had other opportunities to grapple with such theological issues in various devotional manuals which were widely available. In this regard, the literary tradition of the medieval *ars moriendi* is of particular interest as it survived the Protestant onslaught and saw many variegated revivals far into the late seventeenth century.¹⁶ In *Craft and Knowledge For to Dye Well* (ca. 1490), which may be considered the first English contribution to the genre in English, the anonymous author speaks at various points of “the exyle of thys worlde” (1).¹⁷ This is a phrase that obviously harks back to the Old Testament and to the seemingly endless wanderings of God’s people in a foreign land, upon which later *ars* writers will expand. One of them is Erasmus, who in *Preparation to Deathe* (1538) declares:

15 Hans Weder, “Metaphor and Reality,” *The End of the World and the Ends of God: Science and Theology on Eschatology*, ed. John Polkinghorne and Michael Welker. Theology for the Twenty-First Century, 21 (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000), 291–97; here 292; Hans Weder, “Metapher und Gleichnis: Bemerkungen zur Reichweite des Bildes in religiöser Sprache,” *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche (ZThK)* 90 (1993): 382–408; here 403.

16 Some excellent work has been done on the late medieval and early modern literary genre of the *ars moriendi*. I am particularly indebted to Nancy Lee Beaty, *The Craft of Dying: A Study in the Literary Tradition of the Ars Moriendi in England* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 1970); David W. Atkinson, “The English *ars moriendi* [sic]: Its Protestant Transformation,” *Renaissance and Reformation/Renaissance et Réforme* 6.1 (1982): 1–10; David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death* (see note 3), 389–93; Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion, and the Family* (see note 3), 149–52, 157–75; for the most recent contribution to the field, see Amy Appleford, *Learning to Die in London, 1380–1540*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015.

17 Parts of the English *ars* literature are anthologized in David W. Atkinson, ed., *The English Ars Moriendi*. Renaissance and Baroque Studies and Texts, 5 (New York, San Francisco, et al.: Peter Lang, 1992). Unless otherwise noted, I am quoting from this volume with indicated page references parenthetically.

We be wayfarynge men in this worlde, not inhabytantes. We be as straungers in innes, or to speke it better, in bouthes or tentes. We lyue not in our countrey. This holle lyfe is nothyng elles but a rennyng to deathe, and that very shorte, but death is the gate of euerlastyng lyfe. (38)

The trope that life is a race to eternity is a commonplace in the New Testament (cf. 1 Cor. 9:24–27, Phil. 3:12–14, 2 Tim. 4:7–8, Heb. 12:1). But on a more abstract level, death here is portrayed as the inevitable transition from the shortness of this-worldly life to heavenly eternity. This contrast then paves the way for Erasmus to embrace the popular notion of the *contemptus mundi*: on the basis of 2 Corinthians 4:18, he argues that “this is a greate parte of the Christen philosophie, whiche prepareth vs to dethe, that by the contemplation of the thinges eternall and heuenly, we maye lerne the despisyng of temporall and erthly.”¹⁸ We will re-encounter this fierce contempt of what is left behind in both literary texts later.

Protestant theologians were no less reluctant to express contempt for this-worldly life with regard to what lies ahead and often refer to the popular pilgrimage metaphor. In *The Institution of Christian Religion* (1561), John Calvin exhorts his readers to express “contempt of this present life, & therby be stirred to the meditation of the life to come.”¹⁹ Moreover, he criticizes those who call themselves Christians and still fear death, for “If we consider that by death we are called home out of banishment [Latin: ‘per mortem ab exilio’], to inhabite our contry, yea a heauenly contrey, shall we obtaine no comfort there by?”²⁰ Until death calls the devout Christian home, however, it is clear to Calvin that man is on a burdensome pilgrimage of progress:

18 Unfortunately, Atkinson omits this passage in his anthology, which is why I am quoting from the English translation of Erasmus’s, *Preparation to Deathe: A booke as deuout as eloquent*, trans. probably by Thomas Berthelet from *De Preparatione ad mortem* (London: Thomas Berthelet, 1538), A5v. On the trope of the *contemptus mundi*, see, among others, David E. Stannard, *The Puritan Way of Death: A Study in Religion, Culture, and Social Change* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 21, 23.

19 John Calvin, *The Institution of Christian Religion*, wrytten in Latine by maister Ihon Caluin and translated in Englysh according to the authors last edition, trans. Thomas Norton (London: Reinolde Wolfe & Richarde Harison, 1561), bk. 3, chap. 9, sec. 1. The many abridged compendia in both Latin and English as well as the many editions and reprints of Thomas Norton’s full English translation (the one quoted here) suggest a wide readership in early modern England; see John T. McNeill, “Introduction,” *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, 2 vols. (1960; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), vol. 1:xlvi–xlv, xlviii–l.

20 Calvin, *Institution of Christian Religion* (see note 19), bk. 3, chap. 9, sec. 5.

so longe as we wander from home in thys worlde, our faith is not fully expressed, not onely bicause many things are yet hidden from vs, but bicause being compassed with many mistes of erroures, we atteine not all things.²¹

Significantly, the phrase “we wander from home in thys worlde” is a rendering of the original Latin text, where we read “in mundo peregrinamur,” which is indicative of the original meaning of *peregrinus* as “a wanderer, a traveller from foreign parts, an alien.”²²

Around the same time of the first English translation of Calvin’s *Institutes*, Thomas Becon’s *The Sicke Mans Salve* was published.²³ Already in the dedicatory epistle, Becon bewails man’s blindness and willingness to cling to earthly matters, but by direct reference to Hebrews 11:13–16 and 13:14, he invokes the popular pilgrimage trope: “The holy scripturs calleth vs strangers and Pilgrims in this worlde, & declareth that we haue here no continuyng city, but we seke one to come.”²⁴ Further into the main text, which essentially comprises a dialogue around the deathbed, this idea is elaborated as the metaphor of the strangers and pilgrims in exile is used to underscore how wretched the conditions in this life are compared to the glories that await the elect.²⁵ After providing the dying Epaphroditus with scriptural evidence that death is neither terrible nor

²¹ Calvin, *Institution of Christian Religion* (see note 19), bk. 3, chap. 2, sec. 4.

²² John Calvin, *Institutio christianae religionis, in libros quatuor nunc primum digesta, certisque distincta capitibus, ad aptissimam methodum: aucta etiam tam magna accessione ut propemodum opus novum haberi possit* (Geneva: Robert Estienne, 1559), bk. 3, chap. 2, sec. 4 [last accessed through e-rara: <http://www.e-rara.ch/doi/10.3931/e-rara-2664>, July 18, 2014]; Edwards, *Pilgrimage and Literary Tradition* (see note 3), 6. A still fairly authoritative work on Calvin’s eschatology is Heinrich Quistorp, *Die letzten Dinge im Zeugnis Calvins: Calvins Eschatologie* (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1941), which also offers a good summary of how Calvin uses the pilgrimage trope (18–20).

²³ It is assumed that it was already written during the reign of Edward VI; see Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion, and the Family* (see note 3), 157.

²⁴ Again, this passage is not anthologized in Atkinson, which is why I am referring to the original publication, Thomas Becon, *The Sycke Mans Salve. Wherein the faithful christians may learne both how to behave them selues patiently and thankfully, in the tyme of sickenes, and also veruously to dispose the corporall goodes, and finally to prepare them selues gladly and godly to die* (London: Iohn Day, 1561), *4r. One page later, he adds that as such “straungers and pylgrims [...] we shall leaue behynde vs, whatsoeuer worldly substance we haue here [...], that we shal die the death, that we shal appeare before the iudgement seat of Christ and receaue accordinge to the workes which we haue doone in this lyfe, either euerlasting glory or perpetuall payne” (*5v–*5r). In his marginalia, Becon exclusively refers to Hebrews 13, but the phrase “strangers and pilgrims” is only explicit in Hebrews 11.

²⁵ Becon’s Calvinist thrust has been noted by a number of readers; see Beaty, *The Craft of Dying* (see note 16), 108–156; Atkinson, ed. *The English Ars Moriendi* (see note 17), xix.

fearful nor painful, Philemon addresses the latter's worries that "Death taketh me away from my gorgious and pleasaunte houses, and from all the temporall thinges that I haue" (114).²⁶ Philemon's response merits a longer quote:

In thys worlde we all are but strangers & pelgrimes. We haue here no dwelling citie, but looke for an other that is to come [...]. The houses that you leaue behinde you here, be they neuer so gorgious and pleasaunt, are but earthly, made of clay & weatherbeaten stones, and shall in processe of time decay, and returne vnto dust, & become thinges of naught. But after your departure from this vale of wretchednesse, you shall *haue a building* of God, an habitation *not made with handes*, but euerlasting in [...] *heauen* [...]. You shall dwel in a citie that is of pure gold, like vnto cleare glasse, and the foundations of *the walles* of this citie are garnished wyth all manner of precious stones, the gates are of fine pearle. Yea the stretes of this heauenly citie are pure golde [...]. And as touching your other temporal thinges, from the which as you say, death taketh you away, you haue no cause to be sory for that, for, as concerning your galant apparell, which, if they be not worne, will some be motheaten. [...] In *the* stead of them, you, being once placed in *the* heauenly citie, shall be clothed of God with white garments, which shall neuer ware old, but alwayes abide glorious & incorruptible ... (ibid.)²⁷

In an intimately pastoral move, Philemon (or Becon himself)²⁸ adduces scriptural proof as to why giving up all one's earthly possessions should be strived at rather than avoided. Apart from Hebrews 11, which we already encountered in Calvin and Erasmus above, Philemon attempts to dispel Epaphroditus's fears of relinquishing his temporal things by referring to 2 Corinthians 5:1 and the idea of the dissolved earthly tabernacle being replaced with an eternal heavenly dwelling. Moreover, Revelation 21:15 is invoked with its glorious depictions of the heavenly city, to which we will return in our discussion of Raleigh's poem below. All of these after-worldly references somehow rely on the fact that man in this world is seen as but a stranger and pilgrim and that his heavenly destiny, the goal of his pilgrimage, is to become revealed as the richly adorned home for which he has been yearning.

Although authors such as Erasmus, Calvin, and Becon may at times share little common theological ground, they all at some point resort to the pilgrimage trope in order to relate the plights of the present life to the glories of the one to come. The metaphorical reference of being in exile or being a stranger and pilgrim never surfaces in isolation, but it always conveys a strong thrust toward the life to come. In all of these instances, the metaphor of the life pilgrimage

²⁶ For the New Testament episode of the sick Epaphroditus, see Philippians 2:25–30.

²⁷ Atkinson's convention of using italics for expanded abbreviations has been retained in this passage.

²⁸ Beaty, *The Craft of Dying* (see note 16), 113.

that eventually leads to heavenly eternity to different degrees purports to transcend earthly matters by unfolding and developing new and meaningful perspectives of the life to come.

The Pilgrimage Metaphor in John Donne's Poetry

In "This is my playes last scene," usually considered the sixth of John Donne's *Holy Sonnets*, we find ourselves in a similar situation. The poem begins with the popular metaphor for life as a play that has reached its final scene,²⁹ but already the first line also introduces the concept of the last pilgrimage:

This is my playes last scene, here heavens appoint
My pilgrimages last mile; and my race
Idly, yet quickly runne, hath this last pace,
My spans last inch, my minutes latest point. (ll. 1–4)³⁰

The striking repetition of "last" in "last scene," "last mile," "last inch," "last pace," and "latest point" (which is also "last point" in one manuscript)³¹ seems to move toward the end of each line the further the sonnet develops pointing to the impending end of the speaker's earthly life. Although there is a clear reference to Hebrews 12:1, "let vs runne with pacience the race that is set before vs," the patience of the speaker is soon to be exhausted, for his race is "quickly runne" (l. 3): no longer is his entire life set before him, but only the final part.³² This notion is even reinforced in line 4, where the end of his race is no longer a

29 This is of course reminiscent of William Shakespeare's *As You Like It* and Jacques's "All the world's a stage" speech, but it is a commonplace that is much older as is shown in Lynda Gregorian Christian, *Theatrum Mundi: The History of an Idea* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1969; reprint, New York: Garland, 1987).

30 I am quoting from the 1635 edition of Donne's poems, *Poems, By I[ohn] D[onne] with Elegies on the Authors Death* (London: M.F., 1635), 335. In all the editions after 1633, this poem is referred to as No. 6, a practice that has been retained among critics of the poem in spite of Helen Gardner's suggestion for some loose continuity in the 1633 sequence, where this poem is placed third. For this and some textual variants of the poem, see Helen Gardner, "Introduction & Textual Introduction," *John Donne: The Divine Poems*, ed. Helen Gardner (Oxford, London, et al.: Clarendon Press, 1978), xv–xcvi.

31 See "This is my playes last scene," 1633, in *John Donne: The Divine Poems*, ed. Helen Gardner (Oxford, London, et al.: Clarendon Press, 1978), 7, l. 4.

32 I am quoting from the Geneva Bible of 1560, a translation that would have been known by both Donne and Raleigh; see *The Geneva Bible: A Facsimile of the 1560 Edition* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969).

mile away but an inch! The second half of the octave, then, revolves around the union of his body and soul and how they are separated at the point of death:

And gluttonous death will instantly unjoynt
My body and soule, and I shall sleepe a space,
But my'ever-waking part shall see that face,
Whose feare already shakes my every joint. (ll. 5–8)

The “I” in the second half of line 6 must refer to his body that he envisions to fall into a post-mortem sleep, for the speaker’s “ever-waking part,” his soul, already participates in a *visio Dei* as most critics interpret this line.³³ A profound feeling of fear permeates this second quatrain, a feeling that apparently can only be addressed by again zooming in on the separation of the speaker’s body and soul in the sestet that follows:

Then, as my soule, to heaven her first seat, takes flight,
And earth-borne body in the earth shall dwell,
So, fall my sinnes, that all may have their right,
To where they’are bred, & would presse me, to hell (ll. 9–12)

The speaker here insists that the “earth-borne body” remain in the earth and that all the speaker’s sins fall from there to their place of origin, to hell. The final couplet seemingly abruptly concludes the sonnet and quite possibly the journey:

Impute me righteous, thus purg’d of evill,
For thus I leave the world, the flesh, the devill. (ll. 13–14)

Eventually, purgation of evil and divine imputation are here given as the prerequisites for him to leave behind the world and all things carnal and diabolical.

What at first sight looks like a more or less simple account of a soul’s passage from this world to the next, has puzzled critics over the last few decades. Barbara Lewalski criticizes that Donne’s wit in this poem is “strained”; A. L. French finds it “rather queer” that the speaker can so easily dissociate himself from his sins and that his soul departs so freely in spite of the prospect of seeing “that face”; and Richard Strier remarks that “[t]he whole point of the [Protestant] doctrine of imputation was to oppose the idea that one had to be ‘purg’d of evill’ to be saved,” so the speaker’s ruminations, Strier maintains, are actually contra-

33 See, for instance, Richard Strier, “John Donne Awry and Squint: The ‘Holy Sonnets,’ 1608–1610,” *Modern Philology* 86.4 (1989): 357–84; here 373.

dictory, not to say futile.³⁴ In what follows, I shall argue that many of the issues that are raised in this poem can actually be explained by two aspects that—if ever—have so far been considered by critics only *en passant*; on the one hand, I will contend that much of this poem is about taking leave of “the world, the flesh, the devill” and about engaging in a deathbed scene that can be read in close relation to the *ars moriendi*. On a second note, I will argue that the speaker’s ruminations at the point of death are resolved in the “I” of the final couplet, which assumes paramount importance. Read together with one of Donne’s sermons, it suggests a semantic innovation of a new heavenly reunion between the speaker’s body and soul, the two most central constituents of the Donnean self, as has recently been advanced.³⁵

As many historians have pointed out, attitudes toward death changed in the wake of the Reformation, or rather, change was imposed by the ecclesiastical authorities.³⁶ Importantly, in terms of good and bad deaths, no clear distinctions can be drawn between an ideal pre-Reformation deathbed scene and a Protestant one; only some tendencies can be delineated.³⁷ In late-medieval times, the final moment before the dying person exhaled their last breath was often sacramentally critical as final (non-)repentance could lead to heavenly bliss, temporary purgatory, or eternal damnation.³⁸ According to Philip Benedict, there was a “pre-Reformation emphasis on the deathbed struggle that the dying person had to fight against despair and the devil’s temptations.”³⁹ For example, at least one *ars moriendi* manual from around 1450 exhibits illustrations of a deathbed (cf. Fig. 1) not only surrounded by the familial and clerical by-

34 Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, *Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), 268; A. L. French, “The Psychopathology of Donne’s Holy Sonnets,” *Critical Review* (Melbourne) 13 (1970): 111–24; here 116; Strier, “John Donne Awry and Squint” (see note 33), 373–74.

35 Ramie Targoff argues that “Donne’s writing is fueled by a set of metaphysical questions, and [...] these questions coalesce most persistently around the nature of the soul and its relation to the body”; see her monograph *John Donne, Body and Soul* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 5.

36 See, for instance, Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead* (see note 3), particularly 6–187.

37 For our purposes, it suffices to simplify what was considered a “good” and a “bad” death. For details, see Houllbrooke, *Death, Religion, and the Family* (see note 3), 154, 183–96.

38 Jacques Le Goff argues that the doctrine of purgatory was responsible for dramatizing the final moments of life: “L’essentiel, le choix de l’Enfer ou du Paradis, puisque le Purgatoire était l’antichambre assurée du Paradis, pouvait encore se jouer à la dernière minute. Les derniers instants étaient ceux de la dernière chance.” See Jacques Le Goff, *La Naissance du Purgatoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1981), 484.

39 Philip Benedict, *Christ’s Churches Purely Reformed: A Social History of Calvinism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 507.



Figure 1: Engraving No. 3 in *The Ars Moriendi* (*Editio Princeps*, circa 1450): A Reproduction of the Copy in the British Museum, ed. W. Harry Rylands and George Bullen (London: Wyman & Sons, 1881).

standers but also teeming with at least an equal horde of snarling devils that confront the dying with his sins (“*ecce peccata tua*”), particularly echoing his

avarice (“auare vixisti”) and his allegedly extra-marital affairs (“fornicatus es”).⁴⁰ Although Benedict seems to imply vaguely that the diabolical threats disappeared from the Protestant deathbed, a closer look at death manuals of early modern divines such as Thomas Becon or William Perkins suggests the opposite.⁴¹ Perkins, for instance, writes about “The last combate with the deuill,” recounts how the reformer John Knox could “quench the fierie darts,” and advises the dying to commend their spirit to the “*Lord Iesus*” to ensure that “Christ will come vnto thee with all his Angels and be the guider of thy way.”⁴²

It can be said, however, that the Reformation saw a slight shift in emphasis, namely from the death struggle to a general review of the individual’s entire life in the last moments and, more importantly in Calvinist circles, to the unresolved question of their election.⁴³ Becon in his *Salve* contends that “the nature and property of God is to wound [...] before he healeth, to throwe downe [...] before he lifteth vp, to kyll [...] before he quickeneth, to condemne [...] before he saueth.”⁴⁴ At which point in life this happens does not seem to concern Becon, but eventual repentance, brought about by the threat and fear of the devilish hordes around the deathbed, can be read as God’s final act of wounding, hurling, killing, and condemning, in other words as his “vertical slingshot” reserved for the elect. Hence, the comportment of a dying person during the final moments was over time considered an indicator of the individual’s afterworldly destiny. Dying with equanimity was generally associated with divine election and thus with leaving the world, the flesh, and the devil, a phrase

40 W. Harry Rylands and George Bullen, ed., *The Ars Moriendi (Editio Princeps, circa 1450): A Reproduction of the Copy in the British Museum* (London: Wyman & Sons, 1881).

41 Becon, *The Sycke Mans Salue* (see note 24), 349–50; William Perkins, *A Salve for a Sicke Man, or, A Treatise Containing the Nature, Differences, and Kindes of Death as also the Right Manner of Dying Well* (Cambridge: John Legate, 1595), 109–11. In Becon, Philemon confirms Epaphroditus’s fears that “The manner of Satan, which is the common aduersary of all men, is, when any man is greuously sicke & like to die, straightways to com vpon him at the beginning very fearcelly, & to shew him selfe terrible vnto him, & to cast before his eies such a mist [...] that except he taketh hede, he shall see nothing but the fearce wrath [...]” (349). Likewise, Perkins in a postscript of sorts writes about the dangers of “[t]he last combate with the deuill in the pang of death” (109).

42 Perkins, *A Salve for a Sicke Man* (see note 41), 109–11.

43 Benedict, *Christ’s Churches Purely Reformed* (see note 39), 507.

44 Becon, *The Sycke Mans Salue* (see note 24), 379; Richard Wunderli and Gerald Broce, “The Final Moment before Death in Early Modern England,” *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 20.2 (1989): 259–75; here 265.

that surfaces again and again in the *ars moriendi* before and after its canonization in the Litany of *The Book of Common Prayer*.⁴⁵

This aspect of leave-taking is conspicuously invoked in the final line of Donne's sonnet, but even on a more subtle level it can be argued that the idea of the deathbed surrounded by a fiendish horde of devils that ought to be defeated is not foreign to Donne either. In his *Second Anniversarie*, in which the speaker also addresses his own soul's passage to the next world, Donne is clearly aware of the diabolical threat at the point of death:

Thinke Satans Sergeants round about thee bee,
And thinke that but for Legacies they thrust;
Give one thy Pride, to'another give thy Lust:
Give them those sinnes which they gave thee before,
An trust th'immaculate blood to wash thy score.⁴⁶

Here, we can almost see what that one medieval *ars* manual from around 1450 depicts literally: a number of Satan's delegates sent to seize the speaker's soul. Significantly, however, instead of succumbing to the demonic temptations, the soul is advised to surrender all her earthly burdens to "Satans Sergeants" to be purified by Christ's immaculate blood. If we consider now lines 12–13 of Donne's sonnet again, "So, fall my sinnes, that all may have their right, / To where they're bred, & would presse me, to hell," we encounter a similar or related process: everything tainted by earthly sin is cast to hell, and although the

⁴⁵ The triad of leaving the flesh, the world, and the devil does not only feature in the Litany of *The Book of Common Prayers* of 1549, 1559, and 1662, but it is also a recurring phrase among pre- and post-Reformation *ars* writers. Erasmus, for instance, refers to death as "the laste fyghte with the enemye" invoking the idea of the *miles Christianus* seeking the "victorye of [over] the flesh, of [over] the worlde, and of [over] the dyuell." Also, Becon writes that "In this world therefore, wherein our life is nothing but a knighthod or warfar, must we lawfully, valeantly & mightely fight & striue against our enemies the deuill, the world & the flesh, and by seruent and diligent prayer vnto God so triumphe ouer them thorow the help of our graund captain Christ, that we may haue a glorious spoill of our ennemies, & garnishe our selues with al kind of victorious & roial robes I meane, all good workes & godly vertues." See Erasmus, *Preparation to Deathe*, A2r, A7r; Becon, *The Sycke Mans Salue*, *6v; Brian Cummings, ed., *The Book of Common Prayer: The Texts of 1549, 1559, and 1662* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 41, 117, 260. The origin of this triad is hard to determine, but can be traced through its early Christian form all the way back to Plato's *The Republic*; see Patrick Cullen, *Infernal Triad: The Flesh, the World, and the Devil in Spenser and Milton* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974), xxv–xxvi.

⁴⁶ John Donne, *The Second Anniversarie of the Progres of the Soule; Wherein: by Occasion of the Religious Death of Mistris Elizabeth Drury, the Incommodities of the Soule in this Life and her Exaltation in the Next, are Contemplated*, 1612, in *The Epithalamions, Anniversaries, and Epicedes*, ed. Wesley Milgate (Oxford, London, et al.: Clarendon Press, 1978), 39–56, here ll. 102–06.

hell-ward haulers remain passively obscure, in light of the passage from *The Second Anniversarie*, “Satans Sergeants” are at least likely candidates for this undertaking. Furthermore, Targoff has observed that “[t]he gesture of dividing himself into three parts rather than two—body, soul, and sin—reflects Donne’s desire to isolate that part of the self that he expects will not fare well at the Last Judgment.”⁴⁷ Thus, since sin has been taken care of, the two constituents that are left—body and soul—can be identified as righteous and are therefore eligible for a post-mortem reunion, a commonplace in Donne’s thought as we shall see.⁴⁸

This divine imputation leads to the constitution of a new “I,” a new union of body and soul, to be acquired on the last pilgrimage. It has been advanced that the “I” in line 6 refers to the body *and* the soul; much more plausible, as I have already pointed out above, is a reading in which this “I” can “sleepe a space” as a physical body while the ethereal soul, the “ever-waking” part, is contrasted in the following line as a participant in the *visio Dei*. In the couplet then, the *final* “I,” which follows swiftly after righteousness could have been imputed to the speaker, becomes significantly more relevant: it is here, I argue, that the union of body and soul is restored in heavenly terms and that this “I” assumes a new after-worldly meaning as the metaphor of the pilgrimage comes successfully to a close.

What is so far just a conjectural implication can actually be corroborated by turning to one of Donne’s later sermons. In 1620, Donne preached at Lincoln’s Inn on Job 19:26, “And thogh after my skin *wormes* destroy this bodie, yet shal I se God in my flesh.” Throughout his entire sermon, Donne belabors the doctrine of the resurrection including more worldly matters such as putrefaction that may possibly challenge the said doctrine. He uses this verse from Job 19:26 to argue that while all belong to the “*Massa damnata*” and will see God on the Day of Judgment, not all shall rise to glory. Donne reasons that, whereas some will remain in the old flesh, others will rise in a new flesh to see God, just as Job envisioned it for himself. Together with the verse that follows, “Whome *I my self* shal se” or in its Vulgate rendering “quem visurus sum *ego ipse*” (v. 27, my emphases), he concludes that since his flesh is new and devoid of sin, his new heavenly “I” will be constituted of a body *and* soul again:

⁴⁷ Targoff, *John Donne, Body and Soul* (see note 35), 125.

⁴⁸ The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines *imputation* as “[t]he attributing to believers of the righteousness of Christ, and to Christ of human sin, by vicarious substitution” and includes references from near contemporaries of Donne. My analysis relies on the assumption that Donne conceived of the concept similarly.

Ego, I, I the same body, and the same soul, shall be recompact again, and be identically, numerically, individually the same man; The same integrity of body, and soul, and the same integrity in the Organs of my body, and in the faculties of my soul too; I shall be all there, my body, and my soul, and all my body, and all my soul.⁴⁹

That the soul, which “was put to the slavery to serve that [earthly] body [...] hath once got loose by death,” and “in sight and fruition of that God [...] was in no danger,” should now “willingly, nay desirously, ambitiously seek this [...] body [...] is the most inconsiderable of consideration,” Donne admits.⁵⁰ But he repeats again and again that, according to the passage from Job (and the way he quotes it and lays it out, I would say!),⁵¹ there is no other possibility for body *and* soul but that both “receive the crown of glory which shall not fade.”⁵² That this idea of a post-mortem union of body and soul is quite dominant in Donne’s thought has been shown by Targoff, but it also bears emphasis that such a union runs contrary to the orthodox doctrine of the Church of England that “the soul should feel nothing but liberation at the moment of leaving the body.”⁵³ For Donne, however, it is beyond doubt that, upon the conclusion of his earthly pilgrimage, his body and soul live together in eternal and untainted integrity.

In spite of its unorthodox charge, I think that this Donnean idiosyncrasy sheds quite some new light on his “This is my playes last scene.” As time is running out and as the “last mile” is reduced to the “last inch,” the speaker envisions how his earthly self will eventually assume heavenly integrity. His earthly body being subject to putrefaction in its grave and his sins cast to hell, the speaker “only” has to turn to God himself, to “that face” that he feared, and to ask for divine imputation. What has troubled Strier, namely that the purgation of evil is redundant if divine imputation has been granted, can only be understood in the context of Donne’s understanding of body and soul: if both body and soul are to experience an eschatological reunion and to assume heavenly integrity, there does not seem to be another way to shear the body of its corruption than a process of spiritual purification of which both imputation and purgation are a part.

49 John Donne, “Sermon No. 3: Preached at Lincolns Inne,” 1620, in *The Sermons of John Donne*, ed. George R. Potter and Evelyn M. Simpson, 10 vols. (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1957), vol. 3:109–10.

50 Donne, “Sermon No. 3: Preached at Lincolns Inne” (see note 49), 3:109.

51 Only just recently, Alison Knight has raised the issues of Donne’s (and others’) practices of misquoting Scripture when preaching on this passage. See Alison Knight, “The ‘Very, Very Words’: (Mis)quoting Scripture in Lancelot Andrewes’s and John Donne’s Sermons on Job 19:23–27,” *Studies in Philology* 111.3 (2014): 442–69.

52 Donne, “Sermon No. 3: Preached at Lincolns Inne” (see note 49), 3:110.

53 Targoff, *John Donne, Body and Soul* (see note 35), 79–80.

The result of this imputative and purgative process is subtly alluded to as a new heavenly self, as a new “I,” in the final line of the poem: “For thus *I* leave the world, the flesh, the devil” (l. 14, my emphasis). This new “I” is entitled to take leave of the world. Or put differently, it is on his last mile, on its last inch presumably, that the speaker of this poem envisions and hopes for a process of purgation and imputation, and it is only through this very process on the metaphorical last pilgrimage that the “I” can assume a new heavenly meaning in that it subsumes the union of both a purified soul and a body, “purg’d” of all things evil.

As was shown in the above, fourteen lines about a last pilgrimage can give rise to some contentious issues; quite a number of them can, however, be explained by further enquiring into the depths of the last pilgrimage as a trope as well as into devotional literature such as the *ars moriendi* or Donne’s sermon, the latter of which illuminating the full potential of the pilgrimage metaphor here. In the poem, the last pilgrimage that the speaker at the point of death has to take is essentially about the in-mortem separation of sin, body, and soul as well as a post-mortem reunion of the latter two into a new heavenly “I”: a new set of meaning is instilled into the first personal pronoun once the earthly peregrinations are concluded.

The Pilgrimage Metaphor in Sir Walter Raleigh’s Poetry

In “The Passionate mans Pilgrimage,” a poem that has often been attributed to Sir Walter Raleigh, some aspects may be similar to Donne’s, but others are indeed markedly different. It begins with a request uttered by the “*one at the point of death*”:

Give me my Scallop shell of quiet,
My staffe of Faith to walke upon,
My scrip of Joy, Immortal diet,
My bottle of salvation:
My Gowne of Glory, hopes true gage,
And thus Ile take my pilgrimage. (ll. 1–6)⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Throughout this paper, I quote from Sir Walter Raleigh, “The Passionate mans Pilgrimage, supposed to be written by one at the point of death,” 1604, in *The Poems of Sir Walter Raleigh: A Historical Edition*, ed. Michael Rudick. Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 209 (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 1999), 126–27.

Equipped with the traditional paraphernalia of the medieval place-pilgrim, he “Travels to the land of heauen, / Over the silver mountaines, / Where spring the Nectar fountaines” (ll. 10–12). On his “happie blisfull way” (l. 19), he encounters other pilgrims “That have shooke off their gownes of clay, / And goe appareld fresh like mee” (ll. 20–21). The pilgrims are soon “fild with immortalitie” and their heavenly abode is presented fairly ostentatiously and is reminiscent of the final passages of the Book of Revelation, for “the holy paths” are

Strewde with Rubies thicke as gravell
Seelings of Diamonds, Sapphire floores,
High walles of Corall and Pearle Bowre. (ll. 30–34)

The tone, however, shifts and becomes less ornate, for the two stanzas that follow juxtapose the practice of earthly and heavenly justice: in the “Bribeless [bribe-less] hall” of heaven

no corrupted voyces brall,
No Conscience molten into gold,
Nor forg’d accusers bought and sold,
No cause deferd, nor vaine spent Journey,
For there Christ is the Kings Attorney. (ll. 35–40)

Thus, heaven becomes a place of eternal justice through the atonement of Christ, the “Unblotted Lawyer, true proceeder” (l. 48). The last stanza, then, is fairly tongue-in-cheek (ll. 53–55), but it includes a serious concern of the pilgrim, namely, that his soul live in eternity (l. 56):

And this is my eternall plea,
To him that made Heaven, Earth and Sea,
Seeing my flesh must die so soone,
And want a head to dine next noone,
Just at the stroke when my vaines start and spread
Set on my soule an everlasting head. (ll. 51–56)

Here, the “flesh must die” (l. 53), and the convict loses his head, but his soul is provided with an “everlasting head” (l. 56), an uncorrupted version of his body, which will allow him “like a palmer fit, / To tread those blest paths which before I writ” (ll. 57–58).

To date, there is still no watertight evidence that this poem was written by Raleigh. However, a lot speaks in favor of his authorship.⁵⁵ The poem was first published in 1604, appended probably as a “printer’s filler” to a collection of love poetry entitled *Daiphantus, or, The Passions of Love* (by Anthony Scoloker), but was not printed again until twenty years later. If Raleigh is indeed the author, the date of composition would most likely be between November 17 and December 6, 1603, when he had been convicted, was incarcerated in the Tower, and faced a traitor’s death (for the first time).⁵⁶ Pierre Lefranc and Philip Edwards cast doubt on Raleigh’s authorship of the poem due to its disappearance from print until three years after his actual death in 1618, its blatantly Catholic imagery,⁵⁷ and various other aspects that they deem uncharacteristic of his poetry.⁵⁸

Others such as Stephen Greenblatt and Rosemund Tuve consider Raleigh a more than valid candidate for being the author of the poem. While the former estheticizes Raleigh’s choice of imagery arguing that his “poems fully realize and elaborate roles which are, of necessity, only partially acted out in life,” the latter adduces evidence for Raleigh’s ownership of a mid-fifteenth-century book of hours (MS Bodleian Add. A. 185) that exhibits an “illumination picturing St. James [...] with the *scallop-shell, staff, scrip, gown* of Raleigh’s poem.”⁵⁹ This, his earlier use of pilgrimage imagery in a poem that starts with “As you came from the holy land / of Walsinghame—” and some other instances in Raleigh’s prose suggest his familiarity with the pilgrimage trope, Greenblatt maintains; furthermore, he argues that ostentatious after-worldly imagery need not be indicative of Catholicism as both Milton and Bunyan make use of it in their writings as

55 For an exhaustive overview on the debate of authorship, see Michael Rudick, “Attributions, Arrangement, Chronology,” *The Poems of Sir Walter Raleigh* (see note 54), lxx, n. 75.

56 Rudick, “Attributions, Arrangement, Chronology” (see note 54), lxx–lxx; Agnes M. C. Latham, “Notes,” *The Poems of Sir Walter Raleigh*, ed. Agnes M. C. Latham (London: Routledge, 1951), 141–42.

57 In *The Faerie Queene*, for instance, Spenser uses “a *Iacobs staffe*” to identify the mischivous Archimago’s “old faith,” see Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, 1590 / 1596, ed. Albert Charles Hamilton, Hiroshi Yamashita, Toshiyuki Suzuku (Harlow: Pearson, 2007), bk. 1, cant. 6, stan. 35.

58 Pierre Lefranc, *Sir Walter Raleigh, Écrivain: l’œuvre et les idées* (Paris: Colin, 1968), 84–85; Philip Edwards, *Sir Walter Raleigh* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1953), 93–96.

59 Stephen Greenblatt, *Sir Walter Raleigh: The Renaissance Man and His Roles* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 1973), 123; Rosemond Tuve, *Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery: Renaissance Poetic and Twentieth-Century Critics* (1947; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 308, n. 29; also see Rosemond Tuve, “Spenser and Some Pictorial Conventions, with Particular Reference to Illuminated Manuscripts,” *Studies in Philology* 37.2 (1940): 149–76; here 151, n. 3.

well.⁶⁰ To me, Greenblatt's and Tuve's arguments outweigh the ones of Lefranc and Edwards, not least because the latter are not able to present a valid alternative to Raleigh. It is because of this reason that I base the following on the assumption that Raleigh is indeed the author of "The Passionate mans Pilgrimage."

In terms of figurative language, the poem offers quite a number of instances of which only some can be considered in depth here. In the first stanza, words like "Scallop shell," "staffe," "bottle," and "Gowne" are redolent of the pre-Reformation place-pilgrimage, but they are invariably used as quantifiers, semantic receptacles, so to speak, that contain components of the Christian faith that are not foreign to Protestantism at all (see my emphases): "Scallop shell of *quiet*," "staff of *Faith*," "Scrip of *Joy*," "bottle of *salvation*," "Gown of *Glory*." Here, one could even argue that a sense of quietness, steadfastness in faith, the prospect of joy, the probability of salvation, and the expectation of celestial glory are indispensable constituents of a "good death" according to the *ars moriendi* literature mentioned above. On a further level, these constituents are cast into metaphors that not only borrow medieval pilgrimage imagery but they also artfully anticipate the fact that this journey will be the pilgrim's last.

The finality of the pilgrim's journey is confirmed in the next stanza, which is replete with metaphorical references to fluids. "Blood" will be his body's "balmer," a rare word in this sense for which the *Oxford English Dictionary* references only this line from Raleigh's poem. The line can be read in two ways: either Blood is personified as a "balmer," a person who embalms, or blood is the fluid in which the victim is embalmed. One way or the other, it already suggests the violent scene on the scaffold: perhaps the poet deliberately does not specify whether the execution will be carried out exclusively by decapitation, as the final stanza might suggest, or by hanging, drawing, and quartering which also includes decollation and which would have been the common fate of traitors to which Raleigh had been sentenced by Lord Popham originally.⁶¹ In any event, upon leaving the bloodbath on the scaffold, he (his soul) is seen to travel "like a white Palmer" to heaven (ll. 9–10), where he kisses the "Bowl of bliss" and drinks some eternal substance "On every milken hill" (ll. 13–16). Abandoning the earthly body in its pool of blood, here, is sharply contrasted with ethereal whiteness, implied on the one hand in the purity of the pilgrim's

⁶⁰ Greenblatt, *Sir Walter Raleigh* (see note 59), 123–24.

⁶¹ Mark Nicholls and Penry Williams, *Sir Walter Raleigh: In Life and Legend* (London and New York: Continuum, 2011), 213; John H. Baker, "Criminal Courts and Procedure at Common Law, 1550–1800," *Crime in England, 1550–1800*, ed. James S. Cockburn (London: Methuen, 1977), 42.

soul and on the other hand in the subtle allusion to the land of milk and honey. Importantly, in these lines, the soul is not just leaving the body but the metaphor of the pilgrim quenching the soul's thirst by drinking from the "Bowe of bliss" also suggests a process of after-worldly rejuvenation, a process in which "more peacefull Pilgrims" will participate in the next stanza.

For every metaphorical instance that has so far been mentioned it can be said that it purports to approximate something inexpressible in human terms. Ideas like heavenly quietness, unwavering faith, celestial joy and bliss, eternal salvation and glory (and perhaps even the violence with regards to the convict's end) are hard to conceive of literally. But what we witness in this poem is exactly what has been advanced by Weder following Ricœur, namely that a new set of semantics is generated through a religious metaphor by combining a "transcendent subject" with an "immanent predicate" (see above): for example, a staff of faith, I would argue, becomes much more meaningful to the pilgrim-convict as it bespeaks a supportive, this-worldly device rather than "just" faith alone. Likewise, salvation and bliss can perhaps be better conceived of if they can be imbibed. Hence, all the metaphors thus used aim at bridging the divide between this world and the one to come.

Through the combination of this-worldly terms with after-worldly concerns, the latter are not only rendered more accessible to the "one at the point of death," but both constitute the broader, metaphorical stage of the last pilgrimage and thereby offer a new set of "heavenly semantics," so to speak. As the metaphorical pilgrimage leads him to "heavens Bribeles hall," the pilgrim is presented with what seem to be never-experienced legal conditions: from the pilgrim-convict's perspective, there is no more corruption ("no corrupted voyces brall," l. 36), clear conscience is a matter of course ("No Conscience molten into gold," l. 37),⁶² prosecutors are not "bought and sold" (l. 38), nor is he any longer subject to legal inertia by being sent from court to court ("No cause deferd, nor vaine spent Jorney," l. 39). Even the royal authority is deposed, for "Christ is the Kings Attorney" (l. 40). All this fits very nicely into a picture of a Raleigh who relentlessly inveighed against the charges put forward by his prosecutors: to this testify the many extant letters to his wife Bess and to others as well as court records, in which he is said to protest against being tried "by no law but by the Spanish inquisition."⁶³ Thus, the heavenly tribunal presided over by a

⁶² Incidentally, Raleigh had previously appealed to his accusers' "reputacione of conscience," though to no avail; see Sir Walter Raleigh, *The Letters of Sir Walter Raleigh*, ed. Agnes M. C. Latham and Joyce Youings (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1999), 252.

⁶³ Raleigh, *The Letters of Sir Walter Raleigh* (see note 62), 247–67. "And I will tell you, Master Attorney, if you condemne me upon bare inferences, and will not bring my accuser to my face:

tainless Christ figures as an unprecedented scene of justice on the convict's and/or Raleigh's last pilgrimage.

These strong contrasts between the present world, for which he expresses such contempt, and the one to come are negotiated by the overall conceit of the last pilgrimage. In this regard, Greenblatt argues that "[t]he role of pilgrim resolved the conflicting visions within him [Raleigh], the Golden World and the world of death."⁶⁴ And in fact, it is through this metaphor that the pilgrim begins to associate himself with a new world that lies beyond earthly and, in particular, beyond courtly corruption. Though he has not departed yet, the poem sets the stage to do so as soon as the way to a new heavenly reality has been paved along the pilgrimage that lies ahead. In this confident mood, the pilgrim is not only able to denounce earthly authorities, but he is also capable of engaging in gallows humor ("Seeing my flesh must die so soone, / And want a head to dine next noone," ll. 53–4). His final plea that his decollated self be reconstituted with "an everlasting head" (l. 56) to be placed on his soul, on the one hand, is suggestive of a long-standing tradition in which "[s]alvation and eternal life are inconceivable, even impossible without heads and skulls."⁶⁵ On the other hand, the prospect of his newly equipped soul invites the equanimity of the two final lines in which he expresses his readiness to leave this world.

Conclusion

The attempt of the investigation above was to inquire into two rather different poems that make use of the last pilgrimage as a Christian metaphor to express the passage from this life to the next. The literary tradition of the *ars moriendi* was read as paving the way for this metaphor to open up new perspectives of the afterlife in the two poems discussed. While the metaphorical potential of Donne's poem reveals a semantic innovation in the constitution of a new heavenly "I" in which both the purified body and soul coalesce, Raleigh's pilgrim foresees a new set of celestial semantics as he faces the heavenly court of untainted justice. Although Raleigh uses the imagery of the medieval place pilgrim-

you may try me by no law but by the Spanish inquisition;" see Sir Thomas Overbury, *The Arraignment and Conviction of Sr Walter Rawleigh at the Kings Bench-barre at Winchester* (London: William Wilson, 1648), 18.

⁶⁴ Greenblatt, *Sir Walter Raleigh* (see note 59), 124.

⁶⁵ Catrien Santing and Barbara Baert, "Introduction," *Disembodied Heads in Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, ed. Catrien Santing, Barbara Baert, and Anita Traninger. *Intersections: Interdisciplinary Studies in Early Modern Culture*, 28 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 9.

age, his express use of metaphors throughout the poem clearly points to the pervasive trope of the life pilgrimage that comes to a close rather than to a place-bound journey to a shrine on earth. Both poets obviously engage with the old-new metaphor of life as a pilgrimage. For both it provides the figurative framework for the dying to take leave of the world, but the metaphor in each case unfolds two very different heavenly scenarios.

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Maternal Death and Patriarchal Succession in Renaissance France

The cultures of death and birth, death and new life, have long been conjoined. We procreate to replace ourselves, in recognition of our own mortality—as Northrop Frye points out, this is the fundamental paradigm of comedy, in which the old order gives way to the new.¹ Death also (re)generates life in Christian scripture and teachings, where Christ dies—in accordance with his Father’s will—so that others may live, offering his crucified body as a divinely ordained sacrifice; and his resurrected body, as a figure of the heavenly rebirth that awaits believers. Nowhere is the intertwining of death and new life more striking, however, than in the iconography and case histories of maternal mortality, which—like the Christ story—are often driven by patriarchal objectives.²

In this paper, I will examine three seemingly disparate examples of this phenomenon from early modern France: first, the death of Queen Claude (1499–1524), wife of François I and mother of seven children including King Henri II, in 1524; second, the briefly acknowledged demise of Badebec, the Utopian prince’s mother, in chapter 3 of Rabelais’s *Pantagruel* (ca. 1532); and third, the suicide of a young mother following her rape by a Franciscan friar, or Church Father, in *nouvelle* 23 of Marguerite de Navarre’s *Heptaméron*.³ Despite the differing lengths of time between parturition and postpartum maternal death in these examples, and the presence of predisposing and secondary causes of morbidity in the cases of Claude de France and Marguerite de Navarre’s matron, all of the women died as a direct or indirect result of pregnancy or childbirth; and all three examples offer insights into the commodification of women within patriarchal culture, into the stark biological and sociological realities that faced women in the early modern period, and into the relationship between maternal mortality and patriarchal succession.

¹ Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957), 192; A. C. Hamilton, *Northrop Frye: Anatomy of His Criticism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 136–39.

² This paper is dedicated to the memory of my paternal grandmother, Della Southerland Chesney, who died in childbirth more than a century ago.

³ Most of Marguerite’s *nouvelles* were probably composed in the 1540s but published posthumously in 1558 and 1559.

Patriarchy and Maternal Morbidity: Preliminary Perspectives

Today, relatively few women in Western society die in childbirth, from complications of pregnancy, or from the toll of constant childbearing. Even in developed nations and under the best of conditions, of course, pregnancy and childbirth are not without risk. On rare occasions, we hear of middle- and upper-class women in our own culture who suffer strokes, blood clots, hemorrhages, complications with anesthesia, and other gestational or parturitional mishaps that not even state-of-the-art hospital care, surgical intervention, or pharmaceutical treatment can reverse. For most of us, if we are fortunate, these are women we do not know, whose passing is acknowledged, but de-personalized, in statistics extolling the rarity of maternal death in Western societies, or sensationalized by on-line human interest stories and lurid tabloids that dwell on the bizarre, the freakish, and the unimaginable. Yet throughout much of human history and in certain cultures today, maternal mortality has not been—and still is not—unimaginable: rather, birth and death figure as two sides of the same coin in societies with higher rates of gestational and parturitional morbidity than those reported in our own culture. In their journals, early modern women such as Alice Thornton, an Englishwoman living in York during the seventeenth century, write of the fear, as well as the anticipation, that colors their pregnancies;⁴ and their fear stems not only from second-hand horror stories that circulated orally among females, reinforced by graphic prayers detailing the risks of parturition, but also from the more direct, first-hand knowledge of neighbors and kinswomen who died in childbirth.⁵

Fortunately for women living in developed countries today, medical advances over the centuries, improved sanitation and sterilization techniques, and the increased availability of sophisticated prenatal care have improved the expected outcomes for mother and infant, and removed much of the terror associated with

⁴ See *The Autobiography of Mrs Alice Thornton of East Newton, Co. York*, ed. C. Jackson (Edinburgh: Surtees Society, 1875).

⁵ In her “Imagining the Pain and Peril of Seventeenth-Century Childbirth: Travail and Deliverance in the Making of an Early Modern World,” *Social History of Medicine* 16 (2003): 367–82; here 368, Sharon Howard cites the thesis, fielded by Linda Pollock, “Childbearing and Female Bonding in Early Modern England,” *Social History* 22 (1997): 287–306, that female companionship and prayers served as “a much needed psychological prop’ for terrified mothers, their fears ‘fuelled’ by knowledge of scenes of childbed horror and by printed prayers that ‘dwell on the suffering and dangers of birth’” (290–91).

childbirth during the medieval and early modern era. In 2012 the frequency of maternal morbidity in the United States stood at 12.7 deaths per 100,000 live births or .0127 percent,⁶ and, in France, the corresponding figures were 9.6 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births, or .0096 percent.⁷ Despite the relatively positive picture of modern childbirth that these numbers paint, however, parturition and pregnancy still claim the lives of many new and expectant mothers each year. Between 250,000 and 300,000 women worldwide died during or shortly after childbirth in 2012, often at young ages that increase the likelihood of trauma to both mother and child, and frequently in developing countries and rural, famine-stricken, and war-torn areas where contraception, access to modern hygiene and medicine, and pre-natal screening are not widespread. Significantly, many of these societies are also strongly patriarchal and exhibit lower than average gender equality, which researchers have correlated with high rates of maternal morbidity.⁸

As compelling as the statistical correlation between patriarchy and maternal mortality in the modern world may be, however, there are a few caveats to bear in mind before extrapolating these findings to sixteenth-century Europe. To be

6 The data are from 2007, but it is troublesome to note that the percentage of maternal deaths in the U.S. that year was almost twice as high as those recorded in 1987, when only 6.6 were recorded per 100,000 live births. These numbers include deaths stemming directly and indirectly from pregnancy or childbirth, and occurring either during pregnancy or within 42 days of the end of the pregnancy. See <http://mchb.hrsa.gov/chusa11/hstat/hsi/pages/208mm.html> (last accessed on October 15, 2014).

7 See “Numéro thématique: La mortalité maternelle en France: bilan 2001 – 2006,” *Bulletin épidémiologique hebdomadaire* 2–3 (2010), http://www.invs.sante.fr/beh/2010/02_03/beh_02_03_2010.pdf (last accessed on October 15, 2014).

8 “Men in particular lack awareness of maternal and child health issues. In a patriarchal society where men make many decisions affecting the wellbeing of women and children, this is a matter of serious concern.” From http://www.unicef.org/afghanistan/health_nutrition_2179.htm (last accessed on October 15, 2014). See also Ruchira T. Naved, Lauren S. Blum, and Sadia Chowdhury, “Violence against Women with Chronic Maternal Disabilities in Rural Bangladesh,” *Journal of Health, Population, and Nutrition* 30 (2012): 181–92. “In South Asia,” the authors tell us, “acute maternal morbidities are also linked to patriarchal social structures and the low status of women who typically have limited access to skilled healthcare providers.” Available online at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3397329/> (last accessed on October 15, 2014). For more information on patriarchy and maternal mortality today, this time in Mali, see Darcy White, Michelle Dynes, and Marcie Rubardt, “The Influence of Intrafamilial Power on Maternal Health Care in Mali: Perspectives of Women, Men and Mothers-in-Law,” *International Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health* 39 (2013), at <http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/journals/3905813.html> (last accessed on October 15, 2014). For a related discussion within the early modern context, see Lianne McTavish, *Childbirth and the Display of Authority in Early Modern France* (Aldershot, UK, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005).

sure, Renaissance France's patriarchal culture contributed to the premature death of countless young mothers, who labored to produce male heirs at the expense of their own health, often when they themselves were still little more than children. Androcentrism also fueled the cavalier attitudes toward parturitional morbidity that appear in both the historical record and literary texts of that era, such as Rabelais's *Pantagruel* (ch. 3); and sanctioned the routine and repeated sacrifice of female bodies to patrilineal ambitions, as illustrated by the early demise of Queen Claude.

Yet patriarchy was by no means the sole cause of maternal mortality,⁹ females were not its only victims, and women themselves often embraced its protocols and ideology—including the risks inherent in their reproductive “destinies,” instilled in them since childhood—with no less fervor than their male counterparts. Indeed, we have no indication that either Claude or Badebec resisted their role as maternal martyrs. On the contrary, the young French queen actively chose to tax her frail body, already weakened by childbirth, by nursing her ill son Charles back to health early in 1524 and hastening her own demise later that year.¹⁰ Certainly, there are jarring notes alluding to the female suffering and dissent amid these idealized images of maternal self-sacrifice, including Gargamelle's pain-crazed plea, hastily retracted, for her husband to cut off his “membre” (22) rather than subject her to the misery of labor and childbirth a second time;¹¹ and Jeanne d'Albret's defiant refusal to march down the aisle, consummate her arranged marriage to the Duke of Cleves, or bear children for a hus-

9 See Howard, “Childbearing and Female Bonding” (see note 5), 368: “Roger Schofield's careful statistical analysis estimates that an early modern woman's risk of dying in childbed was six to seven per cent during her entire ‘procreative career’, much higher than today but less hazardous than some accounts imply (and not very different from her chances of dying of other causes between pregnancies).” See also Roger Schofield, “Did the Mothers Really Die? Three Centuries of Maternal Mortality in ‘The World We Have Lost,’” *The World We Have Gained: Histories of Population and Social Structures*, ed. Lloyd Bonfield, Richard M. Smith, and Keith Wrightson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), 230–60; here 259–60.

10 Marie-France Castelain, *Au pays de Claude de France. Sous le signe du cygne* (Romorantin-Lanthenay: Société d'Art, d'Histoire et d'Archéologie de Sologne, 1986), 86; from Marguerite de Navarre's correspondence, “Letter to Anne de Montmorency.” See “A mon cousin Monsieur le Mareschal de Montmorency,” *Lettres de Marguerite de Navarre, Sœur de François I, Reine de Navarre*, ed. François Génin (Paris: Jules Renouard, 1841), 161: “M. d'Angoulesme [Charles] a sy bien fait veiller Madame [la reine Claude], que en sauvant son enfant, a cuidé perdre sa santé pour long temps; dont, bien que guérie, n'est encores fortifiée.”

11 To Grandgousier's credit, he good-naturedly expresses his willingness to accede to his wife's request if that is what she truly wants.

band who was not of her choosing or to her liking.¹² Despite these exceptions, however, as a rule even strong-minded women such as Marguerite de Navarre voiced their desires to bear children, and preferably male children, to fight for their king, defend their patrimony, and continue their family's patrilineal lineage.

While the focus of this paper is maternal morbidity and its relationship to patriarchal succession, then, my goal is not to suggest that women of the French Renaissance were unwilling participants in their culture's familial and dynastic ambitions, that childbirth was an automatic death sentence for them, or even that females in general had higher death rates—or died earlier—than men. Despite the gender-specific nature of parturition and its attendant risks, in fact, there is little evidence to support the hypothesis that males live longer than females even in androcentric cultures, or that they did so in the past. Anecdotally, to be sure, one might argue that Claude de France's male children outlived her daughters, with the girls living an average of 19.5 years and the royal couple's sons, 27 years; yet such a small population sample has scant statistical significance. Moreover, we have insufficient data to determine which sex lived longer in early sixteenth-century France, but the gender-based demographics for our own era are quite clear: no matter how we analyze current population statistics, women today have a higher life expectancy than men in almost every country in the world. According to United States census data, the average male baby born in 2008 had a projected life span of 75.5 years, and a female baby, 80.5 years.¹³ The World Health Organization lists similar figures, rounded to 76 and 81 years, respectively, for 2012.¹⁴ Granted, the differential between male and female life expectancies in the most strongly patriarchal societies is far smaller than the five-year advantage in longevity predicted for women in developed nations such as Japan and the United States; but even in countries with the very highest rates of maternal morbidity, most females still live slightly longer than males.¹⁵ Not co-

12 Nancy Lyman Roelker, *Queen of Navarre. Jeanne d'Albret 1528–1572* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1968), 41–75; here 55.

13 "Table 104. Expectation of Life at Birth, 1970 to 2008, and Projections, 2010 to 2020," in "US Census Bureau, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2012," 77, http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/2012/tables/12_s0105.pdf (last accessed on October 15, 2014). This table offers projections, rather than collected data, for the years 2010–2020.

14 "Life Expectancy: Life Expectancy Data by Country," in "Global Health Observatory Data Repository," World Health Organization, <http://apps.who.int/gho/data/node.main.688> (last accessed on October 15, 2014).

15 According to the PRB (Population Reference Bureau) 2013 World Population Data Sheet (<http://www.prb.org/DataFinder/Topic/Rankings.aspx?ind=6> [last accessed on October 15, 2014]), males in only one country, Botswana, had a higher life expectancy (47 years) than fe-

incidentally, these same countries—all of them strongly patriarchal—have some of the lowest life expectancies for both sexes, and some of the highest mortality rates, in the world.

On one level, it is tempting to relate this curious correlation between maternal and male mortality to poor hygiene and limited access to modern medicine—and to some degree, this is an accurate assessment. Yet elevated mortality rates are also correlated with patriarchal customs and practices. As Daniel J. Kruger, Maryanne L. Fisher, and Paul Wright have demonstrated, higher levels of patriarchy result not only in higher rates of maternal morbidity, but also “in greater levels of excess male mortality” which stem from “male-male competition for status and power.”¹⁶ While the above-mentioned study is based on data collected in twenty-first century societies, the pattern that it unveils was likely present in Renaissance France as well, where such expressions of patriarchy as constant war, chauvinistic posturing, relentless procreation, and the commodification of women took a toll on both sexes. Women routinely died in childbirth,¹⁷ of course,

males (46 years); but the figures for males and females were identical in three countries (Lesotho, 48 years; Malawi, 54 years; and Sierra Leone, 45 years). In contrast, the World Health Organization’s “Life Expectancy Data by Country” for 2012 show higher life expectancies for men only in Tonga, with identical projected life spans for both sexes in Mali and Niger. With the exception of Tonga, where women’s lower life expectancies appear to be correlated with their higher rates of obesity, rather than with gender inequities per se, all of the above-mentioned countries also have worse-than-average Gender Inequality Index Rankings and Maternal Mortality Ratios. See “Table 4: Gender Inequality Index,” in “Human Development Reports,” United Nations Development Programme, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/table-4-gender-inequality-index>; and the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI), <http://genderindex.org/ranking> (last accessed on October 15, 2014). While the longevity advantage of women that we see in most developed countries diminishes or even disappears in some of the more patriarchal societies, however, this pattern is too inconsistent to be statistically significant. What we can correlate more easily are (1) the decreased life expectancies of *both* sexes in countries with high Gender Inequality Index Rankings, and (2) Maternal Mortality Ratios and gender inequities.

16 Daniel J. Kruger, Maryanne L. Fisher, and Paula Wright, “Patriarchy, Male Competition, and Excess Male Mortality,” *Evolutionary Behavioral Sciences*, 8 (2014): 3–11; here 3.

17 See, for example, Holly Tucker, “Childbirth in the 17th and 18th Centuries,” <http://blog.catherinedelors.com/a-guest-post-by-holly-tucker-childbirth-in-the-17th-and-18th-centuries/> (last accessed on October 15, 2014). Tucker notes that “early-modern obstetrical manuals contained a detailed inventory of the many things that could go wrong in the birth room. And for good reason. It is estimated that one of ten women could expect to die from childbirth related causes in the Old Regime. A married woman would become pregnant, on average, five or six times. Given that up to 10% of the labors were fatal, this means a woman had a 50% to 60% chance of dying during her reproductive life.” These estimates are taken from Jacques Gélisset, Mireille Laget, and Marie-France Morel, *Entrer dans la vie: Naissances et enfances dans la France traditionnelle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1978), 95. See also B.M. Wilmott Dobbie, “An Attempt to

but males as well as females succumbed in relatively equal numbers to the panoply of illnesses that festered in early modern France, including plague, syphilis, measles, and unidentified fevers and infections, with life expectancies at birth likely hovering around the age of 20 to 30 for the population as a whole.¹⁸ The Grim Reaper was no respecter of gender. Moreover, the relatively high incidence of maternal mortality that we see among women during this period was counterbalanced, and likely matched or exceeded, by the wars, jousts, duels, and everyday violence that felled males in sixteenth-century France.

A case in point is Claude and François's son Henri II, who celebrated the Peace of Cateau-Cambrésis in 1559 with a ceremonial, but nevertheless dangerous, joust that killed him and left his kingdom in disarray. This is a signal example of patriarchal posturing, or of the "male-male competition for status and power" mentioned above.¹⁹ From a wife's perspective, to be sure, a husband's demise would offer either a tragic or welcome respite from childbearing; but in Catherine de' Medici's case, it appears that her parturitional duties had already lessened by 1559.²⁰ Famously robust, she had borne ten infants in twelve and a half years, surviving a close brush with death when her last pregnancy came to term in 1556. One of the twin daughters she was carrying died in her womb, as surgeons broke its leg to facilitate the infant's extraction from Catherine's body; and the second twin died seven weeks later. Notwithstanding the pressure of counseling her eldest son, François II, during the heated political conflicts of his two-year reign, and of serving as regent during his successor Charles IX's minority, however, the royal widow—finally exempted from childbearing—proceeded to outlive all of her children except Henri III and Marguerite, or the notorious "Reine Margot."

If Henri II's death freed Catherine from the risks that pregnancy and parturition entailed, however, it saddled her with other burdens that she, like countless other widows, was ill prepared to handle. Leaving both his household and his country headless, the king's demise opened the door to three decades of civil

Estimate the True Rate of Maternal Mortality, Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries," *Medical History* 26 (1982): 79–90.

18 Robert Lee, "Early Death and Long Life in History: Establishing the Scale of Premature Death in Europe and its Cultural, Economic and Social Significance," *Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung* 34 (2009): 23–60; here 38. Given high rates of infant mortality, however, this number was considerably higher for individuals who reached adulthood.

19 Kruger, Fisher, and Wright, "Patriarchy" (see note 16), 3.

20 For more on Catherine de Médicis (de' Medici), see Robert J. Knecht, *Catherine de' Medici, Profiles in Power Series* (London: Routledge, 2014); and Robert J. Knecht and Sarah Leclercq, *Catherine de Médicis (1519–1589): Pouvoir Royal, Amour Maternel* (Brussels: Le Cri, 2003).

war in France—an extreme, but telling, example of the disarray, economic challenges, and inter-familial conflict that so often accompanied paternal mortality in early modern France. While the eldest male relative often assumed responsibility for the widow and orphans, wives took control of the household and coped with familial debts and other financial matters in a surprising number of instances. Yet “in the working class,” writes Guy Brunet, primarily in reference to later urban communities, “the father’s death generally resulted in the household’s fall into destitution.”²¹ As for mothers, Gargantua appears to view Badebec as a comfortable, but replaceable, commodity—whose dismissive eulogy scarcely compares to the heartfelt tributes for the *pater familias* penned by the Spanish poet Jorge Manrique (1440–1479),²² for instance, or the anguish of Electra and Hamlet at their fathers’ brutal passing.

Queen Claude of France: A Case Study in Maternal Self-Sacrifice

Today, we associate maternal mortality with dire poverty. In the early modern period, however, this correlation between the life expectancy of mothers and socioeconomic class was not quite so clear. As Simon Vostre’s iconography, known to Queen Claude of France through her own *Book of Hours*, illustrates, the Grim Reaper was no respecter of rank or class.²³ To be sure, poor women living in unsanitary conditions regularly died in childbirth in sixteenth-century France; but royal and upper-class women, who enjoyed better nutrition, less physical hardship, and more sophisticated medical care than their lower-ranking counterparts, had high rates of gestational parturitional morbidity as well. There are a number of factors involved. Before the discovery of bacteria, modern miracle drugs, and the processes of infection and contamination, first of all, upper-class women were only slightly less vulnerable than their lower-class counterparts to the complications of childbirth. Their living quarters would have been cleaner and less crowded than those of peasant women, but when it came to ex-

21 “Orphans,” *Encyclopedia of Children and Childhood in History and Society*, Internet FAQ Archives, <http://www.faqs.org/childhood/Me-Pa/Orphans.html> (last accessed on October 15, 2014).

22 See <http://www.poemhunter.com/jorge-manrique/> (last accessed on October 15, 2014) for the Spanish original and its translation into English.

23 Castelain, *Au pays de Claude de France* (see note 10), 11. Castelain includes reproductions of Vostre’s macabre woodcuts on pp. 11, 83–84, 91–92, 98, and 104–05.

tracting a poorly positioned infant from the uterus, staunching the flow of blood when the mother hemorrhaged, or treating childbed fever and other infections, even the most skilled midwives and surgeon-barbers failed to work miracles. Second, the lack of adequate contraception, combined with low life expectancy and high mortality rates in general, meant that women were often pregnant or lactating for the majority of their reproductive years, sacrificing their own bodies to replace lives lost to war and disease. For royal women, the pressure to provide male heirs and secure the dynastic line was particularly intense—as the case of Queen Claude illustrates.²⁴

Although Claude was a frail woman with a hunched back who likely suffered from scoliosis, she would have realized from an early age that her primary role in life was to have children, notwithstanding her keen intellect and education.²⁵ These qualities, together with her legendary concern for her subjects²⁶ and the

24 In his *Claude de France* (Paris: Paul Ollendorff, 1892), a somewhat imaginative biography of François I's first consort, Paul-Louis-Berthold Zeller emphasizes the particular difficulties of young female royals in an era that required them to produce infant after infant in rapid succession, when they themselves were little more than children. "Ma fille," says Zeller's fictionalized Anne de Bretagne, Claude's mother, to her elder daughter, "vous me voyez arriver à la fin d'une vie que notre destinée, à nous autres reines, rend bien courte. Le monde nous envie l'éclat que nous entoure et les joies dont il nous croit comblées. Mais cette vie, si brillante et si heureuse qu'on la suppose—et Dieu sait que, s'il m'a éprouvée, il ne m'a pas non plus à cet égard, épargné ses faveurs et ses bénédictions!—cette vie, dis-je, ne nous appartient pas en propre. Les devoirs du rang suprême sont aussi lourds que la splendeur en est décevante. Nous nous devons à tout ce peuple, qui attend de nous la vie tranquille et sûre qu'il nous appartient de lui procurer par l'accomplissement de nos devoirs, supérieurs à ceux de tous; nous lui devons des enfants, et ces enfants, la mort nous les prend souvent, parce que, trop jeunes encore, nous sommes appelées à les lui donner. Les autres femmes ne sont pas mères aussi jeunes, et si Dieu leur prend des enfants, ceux qui leur restent, au moins, sont bien à elles" (13–14). While the discourse that Zeller ascribes to Queen Anne may not be factual, moreover, it nevertheless provides an accurate description of what a future queen like Claude might expect in the years to come: a brilliant and privileged life, to be sure, but also a short one ("une vie ... courte")—joyful on the surface, but punctuated by mourning for dead children, and by the lack of opportunity to nurture those that do survive.

25 See Zeller, *Claude de France* (see note 24), 9, for example: "[Dans] les leçons ... qu'elle recevait auprès de sa mère ... on lui parlait des Grecs et des Romains; on lui vantait les grandeurs et la splendeur de l'empire des Césars."

26 For more on Claude's efforts on behalf of the French people, see Castelain, *Au pays de Claude de France* (see note 10), 32–33, 39, 52. For example, Castelain notes that on the very day of her marriage, the future queen "obtient du roi son père satisfaction en faveur des citadins d'Etampes," who had asked to "régir eux-mêmes librement leurs affaires communales à l'exemple de tant d'autres bonnes villes du royaume," without interference from royal lieutenants (32–33; quoting Maxime Montrond, *Essais historiques sur la ville d'Etampes (Seine-et-Oise)* [Etampes:

familiarity with statecraft she acquired from her father, Louis XII, and her mother, Anne of Brittany, would have made her an excellent ruler.²⁷ Indeed, she was the ruling duchess of Brittany. But Claude was all too familiar with the strictures of Salic Law, which excluded women such as herself from the royal succession in France, while forcing her own mother to endure fourteen pregnancies in hopes of providing Charles VIII, and then Louis XII, a male heir.²⁸ Claude herself would give birth to seven children, three sons and four daughters, in less than eight years—beginning with Princess Louise in 1515, when Claude was not yet sixteen, and ending with Margaret of France in 1523. Little more than a year later, in 1524, the queen herself would be dead at the age of twenty-four.

While documents and iconographic evidence concerning Claude's brief life are far less plentiful than those pertaining to her mother, clearly the fragile young woman's primary function, at least from her husband's perspective, was to produce male heirs for the Valois dynasty, whose hegemony François was simultaneously seeking to expand through state-building and military maneuvers. Much as Claude's *Book of Hours* helped prepare her for the premature death that so often accompanied childbirth and successive, closely spaced pregnancies, her *Prayer Book* offered the young queen a template for self-sacrifice and procreation with its illustrations of the Madonna and Child and a panoply of saints and martyrs.²⁹ The popular conflation of François's will, as the "Most Christian King," with that of Christ would have enhanced the miniatures' pedagogical value for Claude, by inspiring her—like the women at the crucifixion—to focus on his travails rather than her own, to follow Mary's lead in giving birth to a royal son, to have the courage of St. Anne during labor, and to imitate the martyrs who sacrificed their bodies for Christendom. Not just her *Prayer Book*, moreover, but the *tableaux vivants* heralding her royal entry into Paris as queen, showcase the vir-

Fortin, 1836). Castelain also credits Claude with the release of three prisoners incarcerated for staging irreverent, satiric farces (52–53), and emphasizes her concern for the poor (39).

27 See Kathleen Wilson-Chevalier, "Claude de France: In Her Mother's Likeness, a Queen with Symbolic Clout," *The Cultural and Political Legacy of Anne de Bretagne. Negotiating Convention in Books and Documents for Anne de Bretagne and Claude de France*, ed. Cynthia J. Brown (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2010), 123–44: "[Much] suggests that her parents' tutelage was political in nature (125) ... Claude was programmed for rule" (127).

28 Brown, "Like Mother, Like Daughter: the Blurring of Royal Imagery in Books for Anne de Bretagne et Claude de France," eadam, *The Cultural and Political Legacy* (see note 27), 101–21, notes that in a miniature family portrait illuminating the king's copy of Petrarch's *Remèdes de l'une ou l'autre Fortune* (Bn F MS ffr. 225, folio 165r), Louis XII seems "accusatory"; Anne, "shamed"; and Claude, "the emblem of her failure" (101).

29 See "The Prayer Book of Claude de France," The Morgan Library and Museum, <http://www.themorgan.org/collection/Prayer-Book-of-Claude-de-France> (last accessed on October 15, 2014).

tues and fecundity expected of Claude. Among the figures represented at the first stop in the procession, or at the Porte de Saint-Denis, for example, we find “Lya, ... première femme de Jacob qui fut fecunde en lignie” (Leah, ... first wife of Jacob who was fertile in the lineage she produced), writes Pierre Gringore. He proceeds to identify Claude as “laditte princesse de laquelle, se c’est le plaisir de Dieu, procedera ung beau filz qui en son temps aura gouvernement des François” (the princess who, if it pleases God, will give birth to a handsome son who will rule over France in his day).³⁰

At the second stop or Fontaine du Ponceau, the theme of fertility again appears iconographically in the dual emblems of the salamander, representing the king, and an ermine, symbolizing the queen, which together nurture the lilies and the “beau jardin” or beautiful garden of France; in the image of the fountain itself, which “sert d’allusion à la procréation royale”;³¹ in the stylized image of the queen, who is watering the garden that the king, by analogy with Corinthians 3:6, has implicitly planted; and in the words ascribed to Claude that accompany the tableau, which state that “Le Trescrestien a planté ce vergier / ... / De l’enroser et de le soullaiger / Preste je suis ... comme royne de France, / Multipliant ce beau jardin françoys” (The Most Christian [King] planted this orchard / ... / I am ready as queen of France to water and care for it, causing this beautiful French garden to grow fruit and multiply).³²

Even without these iconographic models that helped mold Claude’s maternal identity, the king’s exultant reaction to the births of his sons, in contrast to his lukewarm response to the arrival of his daughters, no doubt left their mark on the queen, who enjoyed the adulation of both her husband and the French people when the Dauphin was born: “Tige d’honneur, royalle geniture,” writes Claude Chappuis on the occasion of young François’s birth, “Plus que Sarra ou Rebequa feconde, / Tu as porte en ta caste closture / Le beau fleuron, second Hector au monde” (Illustrious progeny, royal offspring, / ... More fertile

30 “Le couronnement, sacre et entrée de la royne a Paris (1517),” in Pierre Gringore, *Les entrées royales à Paris de Marie d’Angleterre (1514) et Claude de France (1517)*, ed. Cynthia Brown, Textes littéraires français 577 (Geneva : Droz, 2005), 157–94; here 163. See also Brown, ed., introduction to *Les entrées royales* 46–47.

31 Brown, ed., introduction to *Les entrées royales* (see note 30), 49.

32 For a photocopy of the image itself, see Brown, ed., *Les entrées royales* (see note 30), 111, Fig. 5 (“Tableau vivant monté à la Fontaine du Ponceau le 12 mai 1517: *Le Sacre, couronnement et entrée de Madame Claude Royne de France* [anonyme] [Bibliothèque Nationale, ms. Ffr. 5750, fol. 39^v]”). For the full text of the verses that accompanied the image, see Gringore, “Le couronnement” (see note 30), 164.

than Sarah or Rebecca, / You bore in your chaste womb / the beautiful flower, a second Hector into the world).³³

Given the premature deaths of the Dauphin by poisoning in 1536, and of Charles, who succumbed to plague in 1545, one might even echo the royal couple's conviction that more sons were always needed. For men as well as women, mortality rates were high. For this reason, the king is reputed to have slept with his fragile young queen every night when matters of state and war did not separate them.³⁴ As a result, Queen Claude was pregnant for much of her teenage, and most of her adult, life.

While most scholars agree that she did not die in childbirth, Claude's numerous pregnancies, undertaken for the glory of France and the House of Valois's patriarchal succession, clearly contributed to her early demise. Some even speculate that she had contracted syphilis from her profligate husband as well.³⁵ While Claude was probably not pregnant in the summer of 1524 when she died, this probably relates more to François's absence for military matters, or to his disinclination to impregnate a woman so gravely ill, than to his concerns about her excessive childbearing. In 1524, François was already deeply embroiled in his ill-fated Italian campaign, which would result in his defeat at Pavia (1525) and subsequent imprisonment in Spain until 1526. During this interim, Claude's embalmed body remained at Blois, where her posthumous contributions to French nationhood reputedly included miracles among the faithful who venerated her.³⁶ Upon learning of his consort's death, moreover, François wrote to his mother, "J'eusse jamais pensé que le lien du mariage conjoint de Dieu fût si difficile à rompre. Si je pouvais la racheter pour ma vie, je la lui baillerais de bon cœur" (I would never have imagined that the marriage bond formed by God

33 Quoted by Castelain, *Au pays de Claude de France* (see note 10), 66.

34 See, for example, Knecht, *Renaissance Warrior and Patron: The Reign of Francis I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 114. Knecht cites Antonio De Beatis, *The Travel Journal of Antonio De Beatis: Germany Switzerland, the Low Countries, France and Italy, 1517–1518*, trans. J. R. Hale and J. M. A. Lindon, ed. J. R. Hale, Second Series, 150 (1905; London: Hakluyt Society, 1979), the chaplain and secretary of Cardinal Luigi of Aragon, who accompanied the prelate on his journeys: "It is a matter of common report that [King Francis I] holds his wife the Queen in such honour and respect that when in France and with her he has never failed to sleep with her each night" (107).

35 Castelain, *Au pays de Claude de France* (see note 10), 86.

36 *Journal d'un bourgeois de Paris sous le règne de François Ier, 1515–1536*, ed. Ludovic Lalanne (Paris: J. Renouard, 1854), 299: "On disoit que la belle dame, après sa mort, faisoit miracles." Available online at <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k64291834> (last accessed on October 15, 2014).

would be so difficult to break. If I could exchange my life for hers, I would give it to her willingly).³⁷

Nevertheless, some historians dismiss Claude as “insignificant,” effectively erasing her from the historical record that she helped fuel with her sacrifices.³⁸ Did François do the same? In keeping with his words of love, did the king honor his deceased queen and mourn her upon returning from Spain? Or, instead, did he treat her as a replaceable commodity, as he consorted with a new mistress, went hunting, and began seeking a second wife? Robert J. Knecht bluntly states that François—like Rabelais’s Gargantua—was not present at his wife’s funeral.³⁹ Yet in view of the protracted, two-year delay between her death and interment, scheduled to accommodate the king’s release from prison and return to France, his apparent absence from her obsequies is initially puzzling. Clearly François authorized, or at least approved, the elaborate procession from Blois to Paris, which culminated in a state ceremony attended by the entire court, members of Parlement, and dignitaries assembled from around France and the world. Contemporary descriptions of the event, which was painstakingly orchestrated to confirm the majesty of the monarchy, itemize the myriad symbols or “signes de deuil” (signs of mourning) provided by the king or “de par le roy,” which figure his grief iconographically.⁴⁰ Moreover, eulogies penned for Claude’s funeral emphasize François’s “douleur,” or sorrow, and the “vuide” or “emptiness” he must feel as he gazes sadly upon her bier, drawn by “weeping”—and tonsured—black horses.⁴¹ Notwithstanding François’s presence in the general area of Paris during Claude’s obsequies, however, and his visit to Saint-Denis, where she was entombed, the day after her interment, there is no mention of him in contemporary accounts of the proceedings. Indeed, Ralph Giesey affirms that French monarchs after the High Middle Ages ceased to attend royal funerals—albeit primarily those of their predecessors—as a matter of protocol.⁴² This pattern seems clear in retrospect, despite surprising some onlookers at the time. Indeed, François’s absence from the public ceremonies, confirmed only by hearsay, was sufficiently remarked upon to become fodder for the popular rumor mill, as illus-

37 Castelain, *Au pays de Claude de France* (see note 10), 91; Knecht, *Renaissance Warrior* (see note 34), 114–16.

38 Castelain, *Au pays de Claude de France* (see note 10), 1.

39 Knecht, *Renaissance Warrior* (see note 34), 250.

40 Guillaume Michel, *Les élégies, thrènes et complaintes sur la mort de très illustre dame, madame Claude, jadis en son vivant royné de France* (n.p. : n.p., 1526), 5. Available online at <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k70634c> (last accessed on October 15, 2014).

41 Michel, *Les élégies* (see note 40), 5.

42 *The Royal Funeral Ceremony in Renaissance France* (Geneva: Droz, 1960), 45–50.

trated by its inclusion in the *Journal d'un bourgeois de Paris*: “Le ... huictiesme de novembre, on dit que le roi, qui estoit au bois de Vincennes durant l’enterrement, se trouva au dict lieu de Saint-Denis” (The 8th of November, people said that the king, who was in the Bois de Vincennes during the [funeral service and] burial, came to [her tomb at] Saint-Denis), remarks the anonymous author, indicating his own lack of first-hand visual evidence about the king’s whereabouts, and the fact that spectators commented on his apparent absence.⁴³

Whatever the king’s reaction to her death, Claude’s own status as a maternal icon, often eclipsed during her lifetime by the prominent stature of the king’s mother, Louise de Savoie, blossomed in the wake of her death: in addition to invoking the sadness of her “petits enfants tant beaux” (very beautiful young children), her eulogist extols Claude’s god-given “fruitfulness,” and expresses sorrow for her “piteuse lignée” (pitiful offspring) who are now bereft of “telle mere.”⁴⁴ Significantly, two of these “petits enfans,” the Dauphin François and the future Henri II, had been handed over as hostages to the king’s Spanish captors in exchange for his own release, placing the patrilineal “lignée” or lineage that Claude had labored so hard to secure in jeopardy.

Despite the threats to her biological progeny, however, arguably the queen’s legacy as the mother of her people, a title we normally associate with her daughter Marguerite, endured, in the remembered acts of kindness, fair play, and generosity that she had shown them—which contrasted markedly with the ever-increasing taxes that François imposed upon his countrymen to finance his wars and his sybaritic lifestyle. To be sure, both her tomb, designed in part to ensure for her the earthly fame that Renaissance luminaries so coveted, and her eulogies bear witness to Claude’s ascension into heaven (“va vivre en paix au ciel resplendissant”);⁴⁵ and if her bodily sacrifice provided François the male heirs they required to secure the monarchical succession, so did her death bring the king one step closer to possessing Brittany, which Claude willed to the Dauphin. Indeed, her maternal legacy endures even today, in the yearly ripening of a “fruitful” plum, the “reine claudé,” in her memory, and through the creation of a modern-day school bearing her name in France.⁴⁶

⁴³ *Journal d'un bourgeois de Paris* (see note 36), 298–99.

⁴⁴ Michel, *Les élégies* (see note 40), 6.

⁴⁵ Castelain, *Au pays de Claude de France* (see note 10), 90. The quoted excerpt is by Clément Marot, “De la Royne Claude,” “Le cymetiere,” *Suite de l’adolescence clementine* (Paris: Veuve de Pierre Roffet, 1534), 117, l. 7. Available at <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8624632c> (last accessed on October 15, 2014).

⁴⁶ The school is a lycée in Romorantin. In her foreword to Castelain’s *Au pays de Claude de France* (see note 10), Janine Mabillean, Head of the Lycée Claude de France in Romorantin,

Rabelais's Badebec: Erasing the Mother

Does Gargantua's reaction to Badebec's death, in chapter 3 of *Pantagruel*, draw upon accounts of Claude's demise and her funeral ceremony? The answer is "probably not," given the eight-year gap between the queen's death in 1524 and the publication of Rabelais's *coup d'essai*, or first chronicle, in 1532.⁴⁷ However, the scenario Rabelais paints of a husband—indeed, a king⁴⁸—who loses his

asks the following: "Que savait-on de la Reine Claude de France lorsqu'en 1979 le Lycée de Romorantin prit son nom?" (n.p.). As for the plum, the "reine-claude" is described in the online *Trésor de la langue française* as a "variété de prune sphérique, de couleur verte ou jaunâtre, à la chair sucrée et parfumée ("variety of round plum, green or yellowish in color, with sweet and fragrant flesh"). The history of this term is described as follows: "Au XVI^e s., on vit souvent apparaître une excellente ou une nouvelle espèce de fruit baptisée du nom d'une reine régnante ou d'une duchesse. La prune *reine-Claude* fait allusion à la femme de François I^{er}" ("In the sixteenth century, we often see an excellent or new type of fruit named for a ruling queen or duchess. The reine-Claude plum alludes to Francis I's wife"). See <http://atilf.atilf.fr/dendien/scripts/tlfiv5/search.exe?25;s=3359094600;cat=0;m=reine-claude> (last accessed on October 15, 2014).

⁴⁷ True, the volume was published under a pseudonym (Alcofrybas Nasier, an anagram of "François Rabelais") intended to protect Rabelais from religious persecution stemming from his anticlerical satire, and to uphold his reputation as a serious scholar and physician. This, together with the fact that *Pantagruel* was not published with the king's "privilège," might seem to indicate that François I could have been unfamiliar with Rabelais's first chronicle or unaware of its authorship. Yet given the king's keen interest in the literary and artistic ferment of the early 1530s, such a scenario seems implausible: not only was *Pantagruel* a best-seller that François I would have learned about very quickly, but the author's pseudonym was in fact relatively transparent, making it easy for literati to unravel his identity. Moreover, there is much to suggest that the king actively protected Rabelais as the Sorbonne escalated its persecutions, which François I would have been unlikely to do if he had believed that the author was mocking his personal behavior.

⁴⁸ We often refer to Gargantua as the "king of Utopia," given the fact that he lives in Utopie (a name inspired by the 1516 treatise by Sir Thomas More), is characterized as a king in various incarnations of the Gargantuan Chronicles (i.e., *Le grant roy de Gargantua*, 1532; *Les chroniques du grant roy Gargantua*, 1533; *La grande et merveilleuse vie du trespuissant et redouté roy Gargantua*, 1533), and appears to rule and defend his country as its monarch. See Michael B. Kline, *Rabelais and the Age of Printing*. Etudes rabelaisiennes 4, Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance, 60 (Geneva: Droz, 1963), 11–12. In references to Gargantua, I will follow this long-standing tradition. Nevertheless, let us note Pierre Macherey's perceptive observation that Utopia, meaning "nowhere," may—or should—really have no king in the traditional sense ("on le comprend à mi-mot, ce pays, n'étant pas lui-même organisé sous une forme étatique, n'a pas non plus vraiment de roi") and that Rabelais himself does not specifically refer to Gargantua as king of Utopia. See Macherey's "La pensée utopique et ses dilemmes [1]," *Savoir, Textes, Langage* (2008), <http://stl.recherche.univ-lille3.fr/seminaires/philosophie/macherey/macher ey20082009/macherey24092008.html> (last accessed on October 15, 2014). Significantly, how-

wife in childbirth, professes to love her, mourns her passing, and yet opts not to attend her funeral and burial service is a familiar one indeed:

Voyant d'un cousté sa femme Badebec morte, et de l'aulture son filz Pantagruel né, tant beau et tant grand, [Gargantua] ne sçavoit que dire ny que faire, et le doubte que troubloit son entendement estoit assavoir s'il devoit plorer pour le dueuil de sa femme ou rire pour la joye de son filz. [...] Et ... pleuroit comme une vache; mais tout soudain rioit comme un veau, quand Pantagruel luy venoit en mémoire. [...] Tout soudain fut ravy ailleurs, disant : " Seigneur Dieu, faut-il que je me contriste encores ? ... Foy de gentilhomme, il vault mieulx pleurer moins, et boire dadvantage! Ma femme est morte, ... je ne la resusciteray pas par mes pleurs. [...] Allez à l'enterrement [et funérailles] d'elle, [dist-il ès sages femmes] et cependent je berceray icy mon filz. " [...] Et le pauvre Gargantua demoura à l'hostel (*Pantagruel*, chapter 3, 181–82).⁴⁹

[Seeing on the one side his wife Badebec newly dead, and on the other his son Pantagruel newly born, and so big and handsome, he did not know what to say or do. His mind was troubled with the doubt whether he ought to weep in mourning for his wife, or laugh out of delight at his son. [...] And ... he bellowed like a cow. But when Pantagruel came into his mind, he suddenly began laughing like a calf. [...] So he broke off ..., saying: "Lord God, must I turn sad again? [...] By my faith as a nobleman, it's better to weep less and drink more. My wife is dead ... I shan't bring her back to life by my tears. [...] Go to her burial [and funeral, he said to the midwives], and in the meantime I'll rock my son here" ... and poor Gargantua remained at home (177–78).]⁵⁰

Often we interpret this iconic passage as a symbolic manifesto of Renaissance humanism and its *joie de vivre*, which embraces the new and puts the moribund past behind it. Yet this figurative reading, which sanitizes the author's seeming

ever, Badebec, like Claude, is the daughter of a king ("fille du roy des Amaurotes en Utopie," ch. 2, 177), a fact that connects Gargantua's status to his wife's lineage.

⁴⁹ Quotations of Rabelais in French are taken from his *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Jacques Boulenger (Paris: Gallimard Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1955), and the page numbers in parentheses refer to this edition. As for the character Badebec, she appears briefly in *Les chroniques du grant roy Gargantua*. See Marcel Françon, "La genèse de Pantagruel," *The Modern Language Journal* 39 (1955): 17–18; and Françon, "Des Chroniques Gargantuines à Pantagruel," *Modern Philology* 53 (1955): 82–87. These anonymous *Chroniques* and other iterations of the Gargantuan Chronicles were more or less contemporaneous with Rabelais's *Pantagruel*, and some suggest that Rabelais himself was the author. Françon, like many other scholars, instead believes that the earliest Gargantuan Chronicles preceded Rabelais's *Pantagruel*, and that his references to Badebec, her background, and her death are expanded borrowings from this tradition. See *Les chroniques gargantuines*, ed. Christine Lauvernât-Gagnière, Guy Demerson, Roland Antonio-li, and Mireille Huchon (Paris: Nizet, 1988), 150.

⁵⁰ Trans. J. M. Cohen, *The Histories of Gargantua and Pantagruel* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1955). All translations of Rabelais are taken from this edition, and the page numbers that follow them refer to this volume.

misogyny by making Badebec a symbol rather than a woman, imposes yet another degree of erasure upon the deceased mother, who is not only dead, but also immediately forgotten to the point of being expunged exegetically, relegated to the role of a signifier who always points to something other than herself. To be sure, Badebec is described as “good” (“ma tant bonne femme ... ta bonne mere,” 181), much as Claude was; and the eulogies for both women predict a speedy ascent to Paradise, the divine reward for sacrificing one’s body to the state: “Elle est en paradis pour le moins,” says Gargantua, “si mieulx ne est” (182; “She is in Paradise at least, if in no better place, 178).

Unlike Claude, so fondly remembered by her people, however, Badebec never again appears in the text, and thus appears to be forgotten as Gargantua looks to the future—not just to his infant son, but also to his wife’s replacement, as part of the patriarchal exchange and commodification of women: “Il faut penser à m’en trouver une autre” (182; “I must think of finding another,” 178), he declares, considering remarriage more immediately than François I appears to have done, given the four years that elapsed between Claude’s funeral and his union with Eleanor of Austria;⁵¹ but then again, Gargantua, unlike François, either has no mistresses or does not flaunt them. For all his rhetoric, moreover, the Utopian giant does not remarry, as he plots out an education for his son that is almost exclusively androcentric and patriarchal. While Gargantua’s vision of Pantagruel’s growth is progressive, in the sense that he predicts increasingly stellar intellectual accomplishments from one generation to the next, the king nevertheless constructs the youth as a mirror of himself (“comme un miroir représentant la personne de moy toy père” (204; “a mirror representing the person of me your father,” 194) who will replicate and succeed his father without maternal influence.

While subsequent works by Rabelais seem less blatantly antifeminist, Badebec’s death in childbirth leaves its mark on his *Pantagruel* as a gesture of female exclusion that colors the entire volume. Yet is this Rabelais’s point, or is he simultaneously interrogating the patrilineal genealogies and androcentric hegemony that he appears to espouse? Scholars such as Defaux and Brault have argued that Gargantua’s letter on learning, with its exaggerated focus on the oneness of

51 As the sister of the Habsburg Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, who was also king of Spain and François I’s archrival, Eleanor of Austria and Castile was herself a matrimonial pawn who married King Manuel I of Portugal, with whom she had two children, before her widowhood and remarriage to the French king. With three sons from his union with Claude and a mistress, Anne de Pisseleu, to whom he was devoted, François spent very little time with his new wife, who appeared at state functions, performed charitable works, and cared for her stepdaughters.

father and son, is in fact a parody;⁵² and chapter 3, which initially appears to affirm patriarchy by removing Badebec from the familial succession, ultimately casts the Utopian king, rather than his deceased consort, as a self-indulgent buffoon. On one level, of course, Gargantua's bumbling eulogy, in which he mourns his dead wife conventionally as "ma mignonne, m'amyé" (181; "my sweet, my darling," 177) before likening her to replaceable garments for the lower bodily strata ("ma braguette, ma savate, ma pantofle" (181; "my codpiece, my shoe, my slipper," 177), may be read as the distraught ramblings of a bereaved husband who is at a loss for appropriate words to communicate his sorrow.

While the giant's implication that Badebec "fit" him as comfortably as an old shoe is jarring, especially to modern readers, we cannot exclude the possibility that the tribute is to some degree heart-felt and more encomiastic than it initially appears. Expressing the reality of death in all its complexity, and the full range of emotions it triggers in us, after all, is no easy task for anyone; and Rabelais, far from being a linguistically naïve writer, repeatedly explores the gap between signifier and signified, and between language's potential and its limitations, throughout his rollicking, macaronic prose—even in his treatment of maternal death. For this reason, Gargantua's seemingly irreverent tribute to Badebec may be read both as the parody of a conventional eulogy, with its empty formulas and universalizing platitudes, and, simultaneously, as an heuristic and erotically charged "eulogy-in-the making," which eschews polite clichés in favor of personalized and offbeat figures of speech. Although comical on the surface, Gargantua's seemingly nonsensical malapropisms arguably reflect the lower-bodily content and semi-aphasic disorder of the giant's thoughts far more accurately than a traditional funerary tribute would do, hinting at the depth of his bereavement, allowing us glimpses of his fondness for Badebec ("ma tendrette," 181; "my tenderling," 177), and yielding traces of the close, "shoe-like" ("ma pantofle") fit that they enjoyed in their relationship.

Nevertheless, the king's rhetorical comparisons of his wife to inanimate use objects, no matter how beloved or treasured those objects may be, seem to demean his wife and trivialize her death. While the repeated possessive adjectives in his eulogy grammatically represent his coupling, and the closeness of his ties, with Badebec, they also constitute her as a possession whose loss the Utopian

52 See Gerard J. Brault, "'Ung abysme de science': On the interpretation of Gargantua's Letter to Pantagruel," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 28 (1966): 615–32; and Gérard Defaux, *Pantagruel et les sophistes. Contribution à l'histoire de l'humanisme chrétien au XVI^e siècle* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1973). Brault specifically addresses the eulogy for Badebec in his article, remarking that it reveals Gargantua's "appalling dullness of wit" and shows him to be a "pompous fool" (618).

king mourns largely for selfish reasons. With the exception of a few generic adjectives that define Badebec's character, primarily in asides to his infant son ("tu as perdu ta *bonne* mère, ta *doulce* nourrisse, ta dame très *aymée*," 181; "you have lost your *good* mother, your *sweet* nurse, your *beloved* lady," 177; my italics), it is not because her life as an individual, with hopes, dreams, and potential of her own, has been cut short that Gargantua laments his wife's passing, but rather because of his own sorrow and loss of consortium:

"Jamais *je* ne la verray," he cries; "ce *m'est* une perte inestimable. O mon Dieu, que te avoys-*je* faict pour ainsi *me* punir? [...] Vivre sans elle ne *m'est* que languir ... Ha, faulce mort, tant tu *me* es malivole, tant tu *me* es oultrageuse"

[181; *I* shall never see her again ... This is a loss [to *me*] beyond all calculation. O my God, what have *I* done to thee that thou shouldst punish *me* so? [...] To live without her is no more than a lingering death [for *me*] ... Ah false death, how unkind you are to *me*, how cruel you are to *me*," 177; my italics].

In his eulogy, which is actually a pro and contra argument intended to determine whether he should weep or not ("Pleureray-je? ... Ouy, car pourquoy?" 181; "Shall I weep? ... Yes, why then?" 177), first-person singular pronouns referring to Gargantua himself far outnumber substantives, adjectives, and pronouns characterizing the queen, whom the giant king describes superlatively, but generically, as "la plus cecy, la plus cela, qui feust au monde" (181; "the most this, and the most that, that ever was in the world," 177).

Nominally encomiastic, this clause and the one preceding it ("Ma tant bonne femme est morte," 181; "My wife who was so good is dead," 177) reduce Badebec's short life to a single noun ("femme") designating her gender and marital status, a single adjective ("bonne") affirming her goodness, two gendered definite articles ("la ... la"), and a one-syllable verb ("feust") that relegates her brief presence on earth to the past. On a purely linguistic level, Gargantua appears to mourn the "absence that is woman" more than the idiosyncratic, flesh-and-blood individual who has died.⁵³

53 In her "The 'Mutilating Body' and the Decomposing Text: Recovery in Kathy Acker's *Great Expectations*," *Textual Bodies: Changing Boundaries of Literary Representation*, ed. Lori Hope Lefkowitz (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997), 245–66, Martina Sciolino notes that the character Propertius in Kathy Acker's novel, *Great Expectations*, "articulate[s] an elegy lamenting the absence that is Woman" (264). This reference reflects back, in part, on traditional patriarchal elegies and eulogies that have excised or "hollowed out" women from discourses ostensibly to or for them.

To some degree, Gargantua's apparent lack of sadness *for* Badebec (as opposed to grief over her passing), and for the agony she endured giving birth to a son far too large for her frame ("si merueilleusement grand et si lourd qu'il ne peut venir à lumière sans ainsi suffocquer sa mère," 178), is firmly rooted in his religious beliefs. Because his wife was so "good" that she is now in heaven, the Utopian king is able to rationalize his self-pity on the grounds that Badebec no longer needs his sympathies: rather, he pictures her as "bien heureuse" (182; "very happy," 178) and exempt from earthly "misères et calamitéz" (182; "miseries and calamities," 178) in her new position "en paradis," where she continues to serve Gargantua by praying for him, Pantagruel, and the rest of her family members and friends ("elle prie Dieu pour nous," 182). Unlike Queen Claude, Badebec works no postmortem miracles as far as we know; but Gargantua's attribution of intercessory powers to her implies a similar degree of beatitude and saintliness. In Badebec's case, this status derives not only from her virtue and martyrdom in the service of patriarchy, through the perpetuation of Gargantua's ancient and illustrious lineage (ch. 1), but also from her self-sacrificial role in Pantagruel's strange and prodigious nativity: for in addition to giving birth to a descendant of Hercules destined for "marvelous feats" ("choses merueilleuses," 180), she miraculously expels 68 mules and muleteers, 9 dromedaries, 7 camels, and sundry victuals from her bounteous womb.

If the giant's response to his wife's childbed suffering and death is consistent with his faith, the teachings of his culture, and his patriarchal values, it is also rooted in pragmatism and in the biological realities of his time. For example, the rapidity with which he abandons his rhetoric about Badebec's irreplaceability (*jamais je n'en recouvreray une telle*," 181) and embraces the prospect of a new wife ("*il me fault penser d'en trouver une aultre*," 182) is so outrageous that it shocks, and elicits laughter from, modern readers; but underneath its comic veneer, Gargantua's perspectival shift is at once a reflection of real-world exigencies and a pragmatic rewriting of his original, idealized response to his wife's death. Even in times of crisis, kings must plan ahead; and Gargantua does so repeatedly. Notwithstanding the extravagant expenditures and material luxuries that we associate with sixteenth-century France, the truth of the matter is that widespread violence, disease, injustice, and maternal death persisted: this was the "other side of the Renaissance," and families coped with these harsh realities by mourning, burying—and then replacing—their dead through remarriage, procreation, and healing festivals of life.

To be sure, the transition from mourning a dead wife to seeking out her successor is accelerated in Gargantua's eulogy, which enfoldes plans for a new queen into an encomium of the old one before Badebec has been properly mourned and buried. Yet this acceleration contributes to the eulogy's parodic quality

and points back to its underlying truths: to the fact that eulogies, by their very nature, which is linguistic, always fail to re-embody the lost essence of individuals being mourned; to the fact that early modern tributes to the dead, no matter how eloquent and laudatory, were often hollow, self-serving, and formulaic; and to the unsavory fact that dead wives, no matter how “bonne[s]” “douce[s],” or virtuous they might have been in life, figure as little more than expendable, replaceable commodities in much of the era’s literature. Whether intentional or not on Rabelais’s part, finally, the burlesque, self-absorbed rhetoric with which Gargantua dismisses his wife, while constructing his son as a model or mirror of himself, draws our attention to deficiencies in his narrowly patriarchal world view.

Notwithstanding the king’s professions to the contrary, father and son are *not* identical in Rabelais’s work; and Badebec’s passing, far from solidifying the patrilineal bond between Gargantua and Pantagruel, leaves the youth thirsting for “something else”⁵⁴—for the milk of 4,600 cows (ch. 4), for liberation from the chains that bind him to his cradle (ch. 4), for a rascal companion (ch. 9, 16) whom his father would likely denounce, for a perilous journey that takes him far from Gargantua (bk. 4), and for a female oracle named Bacbuc (bk. 4–5), capable of restoring the wise alterity that was suppressed when his mother died. What results is not a chronicle of filial obedience and patriarchal succession, then, but, arguably, a tale of filial rebellion and deferred marriage and fatherhood on Pantagruel’s part, which effectively reverses the chronicle’s canonical androcentric interpretation.⁵⁵ When we combine this with the mother Gargamelle’s joyous survival (*Garg.*, ch. 6) in Rabelais’s next chronicle,⁵⁶ together with the emblematic androgyne that adorns her son’s hat (*Garg.*, ch. 8), and the sexual equality that prevails in the Abbey of Thélème (*Garg.*, ch. 53–57), there is much to suggest that the author, rather than celebrating patriarchal succession in Badebec’s death scene as it first appears, may well be interrogating its

54 We see the maternal body constructed as a site or embodiment of longing in numerous critical and theoretical works. See, for example, Sciolino, “The ‘Mutilating Body’” (see note 53), 263; Drucilla Cornell, *Beyond Accommodation: Ethical Feminism, Deconstruction, and the Law*, 8; Grace Jantzen, *Death and the Displacement of Beauty: Foundations of Violence*, 18; Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. Gillian C. Gill (1974; Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985).

55 For more on the tension between paternal authority and filial rebellion in the Pantegruline Tales, see Carla Freccero, *Father Figures: Genealogy and Narrative Structure in Rabelais* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991).

56 *Gargantua*, which chronicles the birth, education, and feats of Pantagruel’s father, is a prequel to *Pantagruel* that was published, and presumably composed, later (1534) than its “sequel.”

limitations, and rewriting its prequel more androgynously, in a way that embraces sexual Otherness.⁵⁷

Marguerite de Navarre's *Heptaméron*: Maternal Death and Patrilineal Extinction

If Rabelais's discourse evolves from a misogynistic version of patrilineal succession, built upon the ashes of Badebec's death, to a quest for the missing Other, Marguerite de Navarre goes so far as to link maternal death with the patriarchal line's extinction in her twenty-third *nouvelle*. In this tale of a young mother who commits suicide following her rape by a Cordelier, some might of course argue that maternal morbidity, *sensu stricto*, is not involved: rather than dying involuntarily as a result of parturitional complications, the matron chooses to take her own life and inadvertently kills her infant as she does so. Nevertheless, the World Health Organization classifies all female deaths occurring within 42 days of parturition as instances of "pregnancy-related" mortality, and clearly childbirth is a *causa sine qua non* of the matron's death.⁵⁸

While the story opens with the celebration of a son's birth ("la femme ... avoit fait ung beau filz dont l'amitié que le mary luy portoit augmenta doublement. Et ... festoy[oit] la commere," 187; "the ... wife ... produced a fine male child. Her husband's affection for her was doubled, and [he] provide[d] a celebration," 267), which traditionally secures the patriarchal succession, it devolves into a tale of ecclesiastical corruption, senseless violence, and familial collapse.⁵⁹ It is the pious husband ("avoit telle devotion à saint François," 186;

57 See Marian Rothstein, "Androgyne, Agape and the Abbey of Thélème," *French Forum* 26 (2001): 1–19, for an excellent discussion of Rabelais's treatment of women in *Gargantua*.

58 The World Health Organization excludes maternal deaths that are due to "accidental or incidental causes" from maternal mortality rates, but it is difficult to consider the matron's suicide accidental or incidental in *nouvelle* 23, given its direct relationship to questions about her postpartum readiness to resume sexual relations with her husband. Moreover, the WHO has added a secondary term, "pregnancy-related death," to address instances in which "cause of death attribution is inadequate": "Pregnancy-related death is defined as the death of a woman while pregnant or within 42 days of termination of pregnancy, irrespective of the cause of death." See "Health Statistics and Information Systems" ("Maternal Mortality Ratio"), World Health Organization, <http://www.who.int/healthinfo/statistics/indmaternalmortality/en/> (last accessed on October 15, 2014).

59 Quotations in French of Marguerite de Navarre are taken from *L'Heptaméron* (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1964). The English translations are by Paul A. Chilton, *The Heptameron* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984).

“so devoted to the cult of Saint Francis,” 267), somewhat randy after three weeks of celibacy, who sets this downward spiral in motion, when he asks a visiting Franciscan rather than the new mother herself if he may resume conjugal relations with his wife: “Mon pere,” he asks, “est-il vray que ung homme peche mortellement de coucher avecq sa femme pendant qu’elle est en couche?” (187; “Is it true, father, that it is a mortal sin for a man to sleep with his wife during the period after her confinement?” 267).

Secretly bemused by the husband’s naïveté (“pensa bien en luy-mesmes que, s’il est estoit le mary, il ne demanderoit point conseil au beau pere de coucher avecq sa femme,” 187; “[he thought] to himself that if he had been the husband, he would not have asked for advice before lying with her,” 268), the friar is not one to look a gift horse in the mouth. With an impressive display of ecclesiastical rhetoric and feigned sensitivity to the new mother’s health, he authorizes the *gentilhomme* to enter his wife’s bedroom at two o’clock in the morning—to give her time to digest before engaging in intercourse:

Monsieur, pour ce que je congnois la bonne amour qui est entre vous et ma damoiselle que voicy, laquelle, avecq la grande jeunesse qui est en vous, vous tourmente si fort, que sans faulte j’en ay grande compassion, j’ay pensé de vous dire ung secret de nostre sainte theologie: c’est que la loy, qui pour les abuz des mariz indiscretz est si rigoureuse qu’elle ne veult permectre que ceulx qui sont de bonne conscience, comme vous, soient frustrez de l’intelligence. Parquoy, Monsieur, si je vous ay dict devant les gens l’ordonnance de la severité de la loy, à vous qui estes homme saige, n’en doibz celler la doulceur ... Adoncqnes, ..., mon filz, je vous donne congé d’y coucher, sans en avoir scrupule ... [mais vous] n’y viendrez qu’il ne soit deux heures après minuyct, à fin que la digestion de la bonne dame ne soit empeschée par voz follyes. (188)

[Monsieur, since I know well what great love is between yourself and Madame here present, and since such love combined with such youth can cause such torment, I am moved to compassion for you, and am minded to tell you a secret of our holy theology. For the law, which is so strict with regard to abuses on the part of indiscreet husbands, has no desire to permit men of good conscience such as yourself to be deprived of true understanding. Consequently, Monsieur, although when in the presence of other people I stated the rigour of the law’s provisions, I must not conceal from you, who are wise, its provisions of mercy ... I can grant you permission to sleep with her ... [but you will] not go to your bed until after two o’clock in the morning, so that you do not disturb Madame’s digestion with your pleasures. (268–69)]

At midnight, however, the Cordelier himself beds the matron, who does not guess his identity until her husband arrives two hours later, only to discover that his wife is exhausted—and that the friar, long gone, has cuckolded him. Rather than remaining at home to comfort his wife, the *gentilhomme* dashes off at the distraught matron’s own behest to avenge her honor as well as his

own (“[elle] le supplia à genoux la venger de ceste grande injure,” 190; “she implored her husband to take vengeance for this outrage,” 270–71); and the new mother, already grappling with the stress of childbirth, promptly strangles herself with her bed cords (“print une corde de son lict et de ses propres mains s’es-trangla,” 191; “she seized one of the cords hanging from her bed and strangled herself with her own hands,” 271), which constitute a visual and verbal echo of the Cordelier and his monacal rope or *corde*. Ironically, the distraught mother’s flailing feet also kill her newborn child (“elle donna du pied sur le visaige de son petit enfant, duquel l’innocence ne le peut garentir qu’il ne suyvist par mort sa doloieuse et dolente mere,” 191; “Her foot came down upon her little child’s face. His innocence was no guarantee that he should not follow his sorrowing, suffering mother into death,” 271), in a tragic conflation of maternal and infant mortality that her brother—there to celebrate his nephew’s birth—discovers upon entering her room. Fully convinced that his brother-in-law is responsible for the grizzly deathbed scene, the matron’s sibling immediately sets off to avenge the family’s honor:

Le frere, allant en la chambre du gentil homme et ne le trouvant point, creut asseurement qu’il avoit commis le cas, et print son cheval sans aultrement s’en enquerir, courut après luy, et l’attaingnit en ung chemyn là où il retournoit de poursuivre son Cordelier. (191)

[The brother went into the gentleman’s room and, failing to find him there, concluded at once that it must have been he who had perpetrated the deed. Without further inquiry he jumped on his horse, rode after him, and met him coming back after chasing the friar. (272)]

In a rage, the matron’s brother finds and fatally wounds her husband before learning, too late, that the bereft gentilhomme is innocent, and that he himself, despite his honorable intentions, is a murderer. Like a house of cards, the body of the family collapses in a domino-like chain reaction, reversing the generative paradigm of both patriarchal succession and the maternal sacrifices that fuel it.

What points is Marguerite making, if any? Or if one eliminates the sticky question of authorial intention, which we cannot know, from our field of inquiry, what types of reflections on the relationship between maternal sacrifice, patriarchal violence, and patrilineal succession emerge from the deceptively brief text and its complex web of intratextual echoes and slippery discourses? At its simplest level, the story is both a *fait divers* inspired by the judicial record and a cautionary tale about clerical malfeasance—a theme that figures prominently throughout the *Heptaméron* and the secular prose tradition, especially in narra-

tives chronicling the abuse of women.⁶⁰ In this sense, it is a cross between the historical records pertaining to Claude de France and Rabelais's fictional account of Badebec's death. Apparently inspired by a pardon tale adjudicated by François Olivier, chancellor of Alençon and later King François I's chancellor,⁶¹ *nouvelle* 23 is studded with well-known proper names, direct quotations, and convincing references to an official court decision that seem to guarantee its factuality. Yet far from being a transparent chronicle of "true" events, story 23 is a carefully constructed narrative that organizes our response to what happens with literary devices. Marguerite's fleshed-out characterizations, discursive clues, mirror episodes, and repeating motifs all signal the interconnectedness of patriarchy, violence, and death; and it is only when we interpret maternal and infant mortality in *nouvelle* 23 against this backdrop that their cultural implications become legible.

Gathered together to celebrate a birth, the characters assembled in Marguerite's *histoire tragique* initially seem to mirror, albeit on a smaller scale, the close-knit group of clergy and family mentioned in Badebec's and Queen Claude's eulogies and funerary descriptions; but as the narrative progresses, this likeness proves to be an inverted, broken one. The Cordelier is a perverted reflection of the "prebsters" (182), or priests who chant Badebec's litany and accompany Queen Claude's bier; and the violent husband, wife, and brother are distorted simulacra of the grieving fathers (Gargantua, King François I), of the "good" and loving matrons (Badebec, Queen Claude), and of the mournful family members we encountered in earlier texts. Unlike these icons of piety and virtue, grief and despair, all the characters in *nouvelle* 23, including the dead mother herself, are depicted as morally ambiguous figures. The husband's intense piety doubles as gullibility; the Cordelier's priestly concern for the young couple's well-being masks his cunning and lasciviousness; the brother's familial loyalty, which brought him to his sister's home to celebrate her child's birth, manifests itself negatively as a lust for revenge; and the young mother, whose bloodthirstiness in the name of "honor" masquerades as conventional matronly shame, evolves from being a giver to a taker of life.⁶² These secondary character traits, which together form a recipe for disaster, reveal themselves discursively and through re-

⁶⁰ See, for example, Patricia Cholakian, *Rape and Writing in the Heptaméron of Marguerite de Navarre* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991).

⁶¹ Olivier was also an official in Alençon whom Marguerite, as the duchess of Alençon (and later the ruling duke, following her husband's death in 1525), would have known.

⁶² In this wide-ranging rendering of the "world upside down," even the Crown's potential role as a life taker, or enforcer of penalties for crimes, is reversed, but positively, with the life-giving pardon issued by François I's chancellor.

peated acts of brutality and bloodshed, which Marguerite links to patriarchy through her multiple iterations of the father: these range from the Cordelier or Church father to the young husband and father, his brother-in-law, and—somewhat differently—the king, who through his surrogate, the chancellor of Alençon and later of France, pardons the brother and offers an alternative model of problem solving.

Unlike Claude de France and Badebec, both icons of maternal goodness and martyrdom, the dead mother in Marguerite's narrative is both victim and victimizer; and while her violent acts grow out of the violence done to her, the wife's suicide and pummeling of her son remain ethically problematic. Literalists may even argue that the matron, more than the Cordelier who rapes her or the brother who avenges her, is the primary agent of two deaths (her own and that of her infant) and an instigator of the third (her husband's) in *nouvelle* 23. Unlike Badebec, she is certainly not a martyr for the patriarchal succession, which she secures with her son's birth but then ends by kicking him until he dies; and the narrative includes no eulogy, not even a hollow or formulaic one, extolling her goodness and virtue. This is not to suggest that she is—or *was*—unworthy of such a tribute: before her death, the narrator tells us that the matron is "belle et non moins saige et vertueuse" (187; "beautiful and no less wise and virtuous," 267). Her own response to her rape, however, like that of her brother to her apparent murder, is not just "tristesse" (191) or "sadness," but a violent sense of outraged honor—which, in her case, is mixed with womanly shame and misplaced feelings of culpability, both common in assault victims.

It is to restore "l'honneur du lynaige" (191) or the honor of the family line, a sentiment more frequently voiced by men than women, that the matron begs her husband to "la venger de ceste grande injure" (190; avenge her injury) by murdering the Cordelier; and for the same reason, she strangles herself, in what initially appears to be a gesture of self-martyrdom in the service of patriarchal succession and familial honor. Rather than glorifying the woman's sacrifice, however, the intratextual narrator Oisille condemns her behavior as unfeminine and impious: by ordering her husband to avenge her "injure" with bloodshed, the young mother loses sight of her humanity and "her gentleness deserted her" (270; "oblyant toute humanité et nature de femme," 190); and in her suicidal despair, she ignores "la grace donnée par nostre bon Dieu par le merite de son Filz" (190; "the grace given by our good God through the merit of His son," 271), a key tenet of Marguerite de Navarre's evangelical theology.⁶³

63 In fact, *nouvelle* 23 may be read entirely within a religious context, in the sense that it stages a tension between Catholicism's focus on "good works" and outward displays of piety, as prac-

Given these criticisms, it is tempting to view the young mother as a scapegoat in this complex tale of violence and revenge, both for her crimes against nature and for her lack of reformist “faith”; for while the Cordelier is clearly the true culprit and proximate cause of all the bloodshed that follows his rape of the matron, he is physically and linguistically slippery, *almost* disappearing from the narrative and leaving the young mother as the iconographic nexus and apparent driving force of the tragic plot. Yet this reading is plausible only if we exclude the rape and the husband’s role as a facilitator of this gendered brutality from the chain of violence in the story, transferring the blame for the patriarchal line’s extinction or failure to thrive to the mother, a traditional scapegoat in androcentric societies.

Notwithstanding her own criticism of the matron, the female narrator Oisille does not allow this to happen. Instead, she contextualizes her words of condemnation and expands the web of culpability from an individual to an institutional level: for in addition to targeting the Cordelier and his fellow-Franciscans, whose focus on “bonnes oeuvres, ... austerité de vie, jeusnes et disciplines” (190; “good works, ... austerity of life, fasting and chastisement,” 271) have blinded the young mother to God’s grace and its alternative path to problem solving, Oisille draws our attention to systemic ills in the Church and society.

In addition to offering a reformist reflection upon the effects and after-effects of Church abuses, *nouvelle* 23 also implicates androcentric culture as a whole in its telescopic web of culpability. If we look closely, we see that all the matron’s transgressions, both imagined (i.e., her shame over being raped) and real (i.e., her suicide, the killing of her child, her role in her husband’s death), are a function of patriarchy. Androcentric values and practices, at times patristic in nature, fuel the husband’s blind faith in the Church fathers and the lascivious Cordelier in particular, whom Oisille describes in patriarchal terms as a “beau père” (good father).⁶⁴ This lapse of judgment, rooted in the benign paternalism that the *gentil homme* attributes to the friar, leads directly to the new mother’s rape. By the same token, her shame and sense of culpability stem less from her symbolically-charged error of mistaking the Cordelier for her husband, a scenario that occurs more than once in the darkened bedchambers of the *Heptaméron*, than from the patriarchal custom of blaming women for men’s sexual transgressions, including rape and male adultery.

ticed by both the Cordelier and the matron, and Protestantism’s greater emphasis on inward faith and grace, a concept to which the young mother has never been exposed.

⁶⁴ Geburon in the frame discussion of this *nouvelle* also refers to the friars as “beaux peres” (193) rather than “frères” (brothers), in a gesture that solidifies the patriarchal resonances of this text.

While Marguerite's *nouvelles* offer readers non-violent as well as violent strategies for responding to cuckoldry, sexual assaults, and perceived insults, the practice of answering violence with more violence to preserve the family's "honor"—even at the risk of extinguishing the paternal line—was a deeply rooted seigniorial and patriarchal tradition that the narrator showcases, and implicitly condemns, in story 23. In this sense, patriarchy is figured as a culture of death in the narrative; and maternal death, far from securing the patrilineal succession, is a key factor in its eventual collapse.

To be sure, Oisille suggests that certain gender traits have been reversed in the matron and her husband, which may seem to exclude patriarchy itself (rather than its deformation) from the narrative's web of culpability, and to focus instead on the "world upside down" trope. The *gentilhomme*, for his part, is over-trusting, often gentler, and less proactive than his wife: he meekly declines to sleep with her without the Cordelier's permission, proposes no action against the friar until his wife calls for revenge, and fails to apprehend the monk or even save his own life when his brother-in-law attacks him. In fact, it is only after he has been mortally wounded that the husband asks his wife's brother why the latter has brutalized him, with a question that is almost comically diffident and overdue: "Quelle occasion, mon frere, a converty la grande amitié que nous nous sommes tousjours portez, en si cruelle bataille?" (192; "Brother, what has happened to turn our friendship, which in the past has always been so close, into this cruel battle?" 272).⁶⁵ Most of all, however, he fails to protect his wife and, instead, effectively invites the Cordelier into their bedroom, letting his guard down and abdicating his patriarchal responsibilities.

⁶⁵ In fact, one might analyze this entire *nouvelle* in terms of the questions characters ask (and fail to ask), to whom they ask them, and the nature of their responses. First, the husband asks the Cordelier at the story's beginning if he will be committing a mortal sin if he sleeps with his wife too soon after her lying in, rather than consulting his wife herself; and instead of reflecting critically on the friar's cunning response, the *gentilhomme* accepts it without question. Second, when the Cordelier enters her room at one o'clock rather than at two o'clock, pretending to be her husband, the wife asks him why he has ignored the clergyman's instructions about waiting until she has fully digested; but possibly out of respect for her husband's patriarchal authority, she does not pursue her objections. Third, when the husband enters his bedroom following the friar's departure, his wife's questions to him—and his to her—ferret out the truth about the Cordelier's perfidy. Fourth, the brother-in-law asks too few questions ("sans aultrement s'en enquerir," 191) before concluding the husband has killed his sister and nephew; and finally, the dying husband waits too long before asking his wife's brother why he is attacking him. Ultimately, one might view the entire *nouvelle* as a cautionary tale about failures to ask timely and probing questions about "face value" assumptions, including those related to patriarchal values and traditions.

As for his wife, she is both victim and virago: she complains vociferously when her husband enters her bed for (what she believes is) a second round of love-making, dramatically urges him to avenge her injury, and does violence to herself and her child, martyring herself for values that are patriarchal and seigniorial rather than evangelical or Christian. Rather than invalidating the interrogation of patriarchy outlined above, however, this role reversal both emphasizes the all-pervasiveness of seigniorial honor and violence, which color the behavior of women as well as men in early modern patriarchal societies—and take on political resonances that extend far beyond the Périgord, the setting of *nouvelle* 23.

While the clergyman's metonymic relationship to the Church is clear, proposing that the overly trusting head of household represents the French head of state, or the Crown, may seem like a stretch—particularly when we consider the adoration in which Marguerite de Navarre reputedly held her brother the king.⁶⁶ Yet when we combine the father's blind trust in the Cordelier's godliness and abdication of his own responsibilities with the era's frequent use of bodily allegory for political purposes, the shifting tensions between Church and State in sixteenth-century France, and Margaret Ferguson's contention that the *Heptaméron* is a social text offering advice to the monarch, it becomes difficult to ignore the text's political overtones.⁶⁷ Through the analogy of the body of the fam-

⁶⁶ While Marguerite clearly adored her brother, whom she advised and sought to influence in evangelical directions, this does not necessarily mean that she always agreed with his policies and actions as king. In his *King's Sister—Queen of Dissent: Marguerite of Navarre (1492–1549) and her Evangelical Network* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2009), Jonathan A. Reid argues that the queen of Navarre was a Reform leader at the epicenter of France's evangelical movement, and that she and fellow Reformers wore a “protective cloak of dissimulation, which enabled them to survive and continue to act” (vol. 1, 355). Part of this dissimulation, arguably, is the camouflaging of serious religious and sociopolitical reflections under the frivolous exterior of the *Heptaméron*. Marguerite's daughter, Jeanne d'Albret, refers to these superficially innocuous *nouvelles* as “romans jovials,” claiming they were a response to François I's and Henri de Navarre's insistence that Marguerite stop meddling in controversial matters of doctrine. See Roelker, *Queen of Navarre* (see note 12), 127; and Carla Freccero, “Archives in the Fiction: Marguerite de Navarre's *Heptaméron*,” *Rhetoric and Law in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Victoria Kahn and Lorna Hutson (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 73–94. Freccero observes that “Marguerite's involvement in doctrinal matters more than once brought her under the punitive scrutiny of both her brother and king and her husband. Jeanne, in a letter written after Marguerite's death, seems, at the very least, to have been persuaded of the threat her mother's religious activities posed and to attribute to that threat her retreat into ‘romans jovials’” (76).

⁶⁷ See Margaret Ferguson, “Recreating the Rules of the Game: Marguerite de Navarre,” *Creative Imitation: New Essays on Renaissance Literature in Honor of Thomas M. Greene*, ed. David Quint. Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 95 (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance

ily and the body of the state,⁶⁸ the narrative seems to figure the French monarchy's lack of vigilance, and failure to protect its people, in the late 1530s and 1540s—an era of increased religious repression, witch hunts for heretics, and institutionalized violence toward suspected Reformers. Within this paradigm, the brutalized mother and infant—a macabre deformation of Christianity's Madonna and Child—double as the violated bodies of both France and her future, in a scene that anticipates the “*mère, non-mère*,” and assault of brother upon brother, of the Wars of Religion.⁶⁹ With its multiple—and predominantly violent—iterations of patriarchy, and its transformation of birth into death, this “simple” piece of anticlerical satire seems to invite us, as readers, to rewind the telescopic narrative, to re-enter the matron's bedchamber, and to reverse the friar's carnage. In a sense, this is what the final patriarch—or François I, Marguerite's own brother—does at the end of the narrative, by approving Chancellor François Olivier's petition to pardon the repentant brother-in-law rather than perpetuating the violence, and by restoring the hope of rebirth, or at least resurrection, to the grieving family.

In a narrative gesture that is at once ingenious and politic, then, the “corrective clue” for the monarch and other readers at the end of this cautionary about Church and State, birth and death, patriarchy and its devolution is a reminder of his own past wisdom: wisdom that moved François I to recognize the merit of the wise chancellor's petition, wisdom that moved him to grant clemency to the repentant Perigordian brother-in law, wisdom that moved him to name the wise François Olivier chancellor of France, and wisdom that moved him to pardon religious dissidents earlier in his reign. Notwithstanding its violence, *nouvelle* 23 thus straddles both past and future while offering a vision that is both prophetic and nostalgic. Between the child's birth at the story's beginning, and the govern-

Texts and Studies, 1992). She contends that Marguerite de Navarre “gives us the portrait of the author as courtier—someone who needs exquisite skills of persuasion as she attempts to play one of the most difficult of the roles Castiglione's male interlocutors discuss: the role of the courtier not only as ‘ornament,’ but as educator of the prince” (178). Freccero elaborates further on this thesis in her “Archives in the Fiction” (see note 66), 75–77.

68 See P. Archambault, “The Analogy of the Body in Renaissance Political Literature,” *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 29 (1967): 21–53; and Sarah Hanley, who in her “The Monarchic State in Early Modern France: Marital Regime Government and Male Right,” *Politics, Ideology, and the Law in Early Modern France: Essays in Honor of J.H.M. Salmon*, ed. Adrianna Bakos (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 1994), 107–26, notes the “analogic equivalencies” (110) between king-state and husband-wife in monarchic law of the era.

69 “Les Misères,” in *Les Tragiques*, ed. Charles Read (Paris: Librairie des Bibliophiles, 1896), vol. 1, 55. Available at <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k5453967j> (last accessed on October 15, 2014).

ment's pardon of the brother-in-law's mayhem at the end of the narrative, the outlook for the broken family, and for the self-destructive country they arguably represent, is bleak and given over to death—maternal, infant, paternal, and possibly fraternal death.

Yet the *nouvelle* is also a tale of three individuals named François, and therein lies a final clue to the narrative's textual operations and "take-home lesson."⁷⁰ For if Chancellor François Oliver compassionately prompts King François or Francis to pardon the contrite brother-in-law rather than imprisoning or executing him, so does the closing reference to the king point back toward the story's beginning, and to the model of an earlier François: "Au pays de Perigort," writes Marguerite, "il y avoit ung gentil homme qui avoit telle devotion à saint François, qu'il luy sembloit que tous ceulx qui portoient son habit devoient estre semblables au bon saint" (186: "There lived in the Périgord a certain gentleman who was so devoted to the cult of Saint Francis that he was under the impression that anyone who wore the Franciscan habit must be as holy as the good Saint himself," 267). Those who wear the Franciscan habit, of course, are the Cordeliers or Franciscan friars so excoriated throughout the *Heptaméron*, who pervert the saint's message with greed and lasciviousness, as exemplified by the matron's rape by a member of their order. In contrast, the Umbrian friar's own words focus on love, pardon, brotherhood, and non-violent endurance, notwithstanding the trials and tribulation one may face:

Laudato si', mi Signore,
per quelli che perdonano per lo Tuo amore
et sostengono infirmitate et tribulatione.
Beati quelli ke 'l sosterranno in pace.

[All praise be yours, my Lord,
through those who grant pardon through love of you;
through those who endure sickness and trial.
Happy are those who endure in peace].⁷¹

And while this vision of life does not exclude, but rather welcomes, death ("Lodato sii, mio signore, per sorella morte"), the Canticale advocates a godly demise

70 While *nouvelle* 23 includes three men named François, it is important to note that Marguerite writes about a woman named Françoise in *nouvelle* 42, who teaches a prince (often identified as François I) an important lesson about real honor.

71 The Italian text, believed to have been penned in 1226, is taken from "Il canto di Frate Sole o Canticò delle creature," <http://www.multimedididattica.it/dm/origini/cantico.htm> (last accessed on October 11, 2014). The anonymous translation is an excerpt from "Canticale of the Creatures," <http://www.appleseeds.org/canticle.htm> (last accessed on October 15, 2014).

that promises eternal life rather than a “second death,” or “la morte dell’anima.” Whether Marguerite knew this intertext in detail remains unclear; but as a leader of France’s evangelical movement, she would certainly have shared this sentiment—which counters the hope of paradise so often expressed in eulogies, including those for Badebec and Queen Claude, with its opposite: the fear of a second death, or hell, for those who pervert God’s will, prey upon the weak, and foment violence. That the young husband and father fears hell seems clear, for he asks the Cordelier if sleeping with his wife too early after parturition constitutes a mortal sin (“est-il vray que ung homme peche mortellement de coucher avecz sa femme pendant qu’elle est en couche?” 187). In focusing too narrowly upon mortal sin as defined by Church law, however, the *gentilhomme* neglects scriptural teachings about love and forgiveness, brotherhood and non-violence, leaving his family and himself open both to clerical abuse and to sins far graver than having unauthorized conjugal relations with his wife.

With this story, our discussion has come full circle in its return to François I—husband to Claude, father of both his lineage and his people, and the beloved but imperfect brother of Marguerite de Navarre. For in addition to figuring patriarchs in her twenty-third *nouvelle*, the author also portrays brothers: a violent one, who slays his sister’s husband unjustly; a good and generous one, François I, who has the potential to restore harmony to his divided country; and a holy one, Saint Francis, who stands as a model of non-violence and brotherhood. For all the advice *nouvelle* 23 may offer the king, however, it is unlikely that François I ever read it. Instead, death—probably from syphilis—claimed his life in 1547, more than a decade before Marguerite’s *Heptaméron* was published posthumously; and rather than being averted by monarchical policies of pardon and reconciliation, the queen of Navarre’s tragic vision of a family torn asunder would become a reality during the French Wars of Religion. Notwithstanding Queen Claude’s maternal sacrifice, moreover, the Valois line that she died to secure became extinct as well, when Henri II’s last surviving son, Henri III (1551–1589), was assassinated. His death, ironically, led to the accession of Marguerite de Navarre’s own grandson, the Bourbon King Henri IV (1553–1610), descended through the maternal line of her daughter Queen Jeanne d’Albret of Navarre (1528–1572).⁷²

As appealing as this feminine footnote in the long saga of maternal sacrifice and patriarchal succession may be, however, there is little evidence that violence

⁷² Henri IV’s disputed accession to the throne was certainly not harmed by either his matrilineal heritage or his first marriage to Henri III’s sister; but officially, legal purists legitimized his monarchy through the patriarchal succession, by virtue of the fact that his father, Antoine de Navarre (1518–1562) or Antoine de Bourbon, was descended from King Louis IX.

diminished, that rates of maternal mortality were lowered, or that pressure on women to secure the patriarchal succession declined under Bourbon rule, which lasted until the Revolution. Even today, with far lower rates of maternal mortality than those facing Claude, gender-based abuse persists, women are still commodified and marginalized, and violence still begets violence—over and over again. Although Claude de France, Rabelais, and Marguerite de Navarre are long dead, however, their legacies do live on: not through their biological offspring, but in the texts that chronicle the young French queen's concern for her people; in the school that is named for her, and in the youth who will know her legacy; in Gargantua's androgynous and egalitarian Abbey of Thélème; in Pantagruel's quest for the Other; in Marguerite's warnings about the dangers of untempered violence; and in their collective wish for a better world. These are lessons from which we, too, might learn.

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Fear of Seeming Death in Eighteenth-Century Europe

Medicalization of Death: The Living Dead

Two factors—the transformation of the spiritual experience of death and the gradual professionalization of the medical field and its practitioners—influenced the human perception of death and dying in Europe from the second half of the eighteenth century on.¹ While historians have traditionally devoted much attention to religious beliefs about death and its spiritual aspects,² contemporary anthropologists emphasize that the biological dimension of human death throughout history has been rather neglected.³ Historians of medicine can naturally relate to this topic quite easily. They can follow closely the course of a terminal illness, the role of the doctor at the bedside of the dying, the manner of communicating with the patient, and the effectiveness of contemporary medical care.

1 As to the broader discussion on the topic, see Pat Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 77–97; Michel Vovelle, *La Mort et l'Occident: De 1300 à nos jours*. Bibliothèque illustrée des histoires (Paris: Gallimard, 1983); John McManners, *Death and the Enlightenment: Changing Attitudes to Death Among Christians and Unbelievers in Eighteenth-Century France*, (London and New York: The Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1981).

2 See today's classical works on the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times: Norbert Ohler, *Sterben und Tod im Mittelalter* (Düsseldorf: Patmos Verlag, 2003); Jacques Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (1981; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984); Aron Gurievich, *Medieval Popular Culture: Problems of Belief and Perception*, trans. Janos M. Bak and Paul A. Hollingsworth. Cambridge Studies in Oral and Literate Culture, 14 (1981; Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Philippe Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death: The Classic History of Western Attitudes Toward Death Over the Last One Thousand Years*, trans. Helen Weaver (1977; New York: Vintage Books, 2008). We can also name, for the nineteenth century, Michael Wheeler, *Heaven, Hell, and the Victorians* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994). In the Czech context we can choose Tomáš Malý, *Smrt a spása mezi Tridentem a sekularizací: Brněnští měšťané a proměny laické zbožnosti v 17. a 18. století* (Brno: Matice moravská, 2009); Miloš Sládek, *Vítr jest život člověka aneb Život a smrt v české barokní próze* (Prague: Nakladatelství H+H, 2000); Radmila Pavlíčková, *Triumphus in mortem: Pohřební kázání nad biskupy v raném novověku* (České Budějovice: Veduta, 2008).

3 For example, Adriano Favole, *Resti di umanità: Vita sociale del corpo dopo la morte*. Percorsi, 47; Antropologia (Rome and Bari: Editori Laterza, 2003); Marina Sozzi, *Reinventare la morte: Introduzione alla tanatologia*. Percorsi, 118; Antropologia (Rome and Bari: Editori Laterza, 2009).

One of the fundamental issues connected with the history of medicine and dying in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is the conflict between the ever increasing level of medical care and the medieval and early modern ideal of the 'socially good death,' which among other things was based on the extent of physical suffering on the deathbed.⁴

An important historical-anthropological topic is the study of social and medical changes of attitudes toward the dead body. These were gradually formulated in terms of the legal system through regulations of the medical police⁵; in other words, they were medicalized. The term *medicalization* refers to a process, whereby certain aspects of life fall under the domain of medical theories and practices. In addition, it can denote the gradual increase in the usage of professional medical care.⁶

4 Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family* (see note 1), 17–58. Concerning the aforementioned aspects of dying, see, for instance, the American historian of medicine, Sherwin B. Nuland, *How We Die: Reflections on Life's Final Chapter* (New York: Knopf: Distributed by Random House, 1994); Tony Walter, *The Revival of Death* (London: Routledge, 2005).

5 At the end of the 1770s, the concept of state and collective medicine started to be appear in the German-speaking lands, as reflected by the *Medizinische Polizey* ('medical police' can be loosely translated as 'public health'). It was derived from the interest in the biological life of humankind and in the well-being of the population. This concept was first elaborated by a German doctor, Wolfgang Thomas Rau, in his treatise *Gedanken von dem Nutzen und der Nothwendigkeit einer medicinischen Policyordnung in einem Staat*. Zweyte verbesserte und vermehrte Auflage (Ulm: Auf Kosten der Gaumischen Handlung, 1764). For more regarding the concept of *Medizinische Polizey*, see Martin Dinges, "Medizinische Policy zwischen Heilkundigen und Patienten: (1750–1830)," *Policy und frühneuzeitliche Gesellschaft*, ed. Karl Härter. Studien zur europäischen Rechtsgeschichte: Veröffentlichungen des Max-Planck-Instituts für Europäische Rechtsgeschichte, 129 (Frankfurt a.M.: Vittorio Klostermann Verlag, 2000), 263–95; Caren Möller, *Medizinalpolizei: Die Theorie des staatlichen Gesundheitswesens im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert*. Studien zu Policy und Policywissenschaft (Frankfurt a.M.: Vittorio Klostermann Verlag, 2005); Patrick E Carroll, "Medical Police and the History of Public Health," *Medical History* 46 (2002): 461–94.

6 Furthermore, Ute Frevert, "Akademische Medizin und soziale Unterschichten im 19. Jahrhundert: Professionsinteressen—Zivilisationsmission—Sozialpolitik," *Jahrbuch des Instituts für Geschichte der Medizin der Robert Bosch Stiftung* 4 (1985), ed. Renate Wittern (Stuttgart: Hippokrates Verlag, 1987), 41–59; Ludmilla Jordanova, *The Social Construction of Medical Knowledge*. Social History of Medicine, 8 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 361–81; Matthew Ramsey, *Professional and Popular Medicine in France, 1770–1830: The Social World of Medical Practice*. Cambridge Studies in the History of Medicine (Cambridge, La Rochelle, Melbourne, and Sydney: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 299–301; Thomas Broman, "Zwischen Staat und Konsumgesellschaft: Aufklärung und die Entwicklung des deutschen Medizinalwesens im 18. Jahrhundert," *Zwischen Aufklärung, Policy und Verwaltung: Zur Genese des Medizinalwesens 1750–1850*, ed. Bettina Wahrig and Werner Sohn. Wolfenbütteler Forschungen, 102 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2003), 91–107.

The process called *medicalization* emerged from the new forms of economic thinking and from the demographic population growth of enlightened Europe. Michel Foucault in the 1970s called these new forms “biopolitics” or “bio-power.” In other words, *medicalization* was closely connected to the ‘economy of health,’ which consisted of the idea of uninterrupted improvement of medicine (including that of sciences linked with health) as a part of the developing state. According to Foucault, from the eighteenth century on, everyday life, manners, behavior, and even the human body were all being integrated into the ever greater medical net.⁷

The major turning point in the relationship between doctor and death came with the publication of a work by a Danish anatomist, Jacques-Bénigne Winsløw (1669–1760), *Quaestio medico-chirurgica. An mortis incertae signa minus incerta à Chirurgicis, quam ab aliis experimentis?* (1740).⁸ This author was inspired by the works of Paolo Zacchia (1584–1659) and Giovanni Maria Lancisi (1654–1720), the founding fathers of forensic and legal medicine.⁹ Winsløw’s concern dealt with the uncertain nature of the signs of death. He considered only decomposition of the body, death spots on the skin, and cadaverous odor as indicators for determining the physical end of human existence.¹⁰

Jacques-Bénigne Winsløw cast doubt on certain external indicators of death, which until then were accepted without reservations by his contemporaries. These dealt with facial pallor, body chill, limb stiffness, immobility, and absence of sense perception. The problem rested in the complexity of the process of dying, which could not be specified by a single symptom, whether it was absence

7 Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), 9–72.

8 Jacques-Bénigne Winsløw, *Quaestio medico-chirurgica: An mortis incertae signa minus incerta à Chirurgicis, quam ab aliis experimentis?* (Paris: Quillau, 1740); Jacques-Bénigne Winsløw, *Terrible supplice et cruel désespoir des personnes enterrées vivantes et qui sont présumées mortes* (Paris: Bullot, 1752).

9 Paolo Zacchia (1584–1659) was the personal physician of the Popes Innocent X and Alexander VII and head of the health system in the Papal State. He gained fame through his Latin work *Quaestiones Medico-Legales* (1621–1659). He concerned himself with topics such as psychopathological illnesses, toxicology, epilepsy, and pregnancy. His inspirational sources included Andrea Vesalio and Girolamo Fracastoro. For more regarding his personality, see *Paolo Zacchia: Alle origini della medicina legale 1584–1659*, ed. Alessandro Pastore—Giovanni Rossi. *La società moderna e contemporanea*, 104 (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2008). As to the life and work of Giovanni Maria Lancisi, see Amato Bacchini, *La vita e le opere di Giovanni Maria Lancisi* (Rome: Sansaini, 1920).

10 Claudio Milanese, *Morte apparente e morte intermedia: Medicina e mentalità nel dibattito sull’incertezza dei segni della morte (1740–1789)*. *Bibliotheca biographica: Sezione storico-antropologica* (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana fondata da Giovanni Treccani, 1989), 17–18.

of breathing, or pulse, through the presence of *rigor mortis*, or the cooling of the body. The ideas that the interruption of major life functions of the organism does not cause immediate death and that the body may preserve traces of life were influenced by various seventeenth-century biological discoveries, which contributed to the uncertainty about the boundaries between life and death.¹¹ According to Winsløw, the decomposition of the body, which destroys tissue and the unity of organic molecules, was the unequivocal sign of death.¹²

Winsløw described as unreliable all non-surgical techniques that were generally related to the verification of death—flaring of nostrils exposed to salt, liquors or mustard; tactile stimulation of touch-sensitive body parts by nettles; stimulation by smoke; forced stretching of limbs; or loud shouting. He only considered surgical examination of the dead body, to be pursued with the use of punctures, cuts, fire or pouring of boiling water onto the body. The key benefit of Winsløw's treatise was to alert his readers to the danger of premature burials. This was to become the first impetus for his colleagues toward a more proactive attitude to the dead human body, which should henceforth be thoroughly inspected, massaged, warmed, and even injured. The doctor should confront other uncertain characteristics of death through other practical measures—delay-

11 Until the seventeenth century, medical knowledge and practice were guided by theories that originated with Hippocrates and Aristotle, and the study of anatomy was directed by the ideas of Galen. The single most important event for the seventeenth century was arguably Antoni van Leeuwenhoek's (1632–1723) perfection of the modern microscope, which opened the way for the sciences of anatomy and physiology, leading to greater understandings of reproduction, growth, disease, and decay. The English physician William Harvey (1578–1657) was the first known to describe completely the systemic circulation and properties of blood being pumped by the heart to the brain and the rest of the body. Marcello Malpighi (1628–1694), an Italian physician and biologist, discovered the role of capillaries in the process. He is regarded as the father of microscopical anatomy and histology. Giovanni Alfonso Borelli (1608–1679) made extensive studies of the mechanics of animal locomotion and, in microscopy, of the constituents of blood. He was a leading figure of a new seventeenth-century scientific paradigm that framed physiological events in terms of physical and mathematical principles – *iatromechanics*, or *iatrophysics*. Giorgio Baglivi (1669–1707) represented the extreme use of iatromechanics, likening each organ to a specific machine. He carried out autopsies on frogs, and made microscopic examinations of muscle fibers and the membranes surrounding the brain. An excellent introduction to early modern medicine is Andrew Wear, "Medicine in Early Modern Europe: 1500–1700," *The Western Medical Tradition: 800 BC to AD 1800*, ed. Conrad Lawrence et al. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 215–362.

12 More to the medical perception of death in the context of the Enlightenment, see Marina Sozzi, "Il medico contro la morte. L'*Encyclopédie* e la concezione illuministica del morire nella seconda metà del XVIII secolo," *Il medico di fronte alla morte (secoli XVI–XXI)*, ed. Giorgio Cosmacini and Georges Vigarello (Turin: Fondazione Ariodante Fabretti, 2008), 79–109.

ing the funeral to 2–3 days after the presumed death, leaving the dead body on the bed, and frequently visiting it.¹³

Winslōw did not care about the very nature of death itself. He still understood it in the traditional sense as a concept which was opposed to life. An important part of his point of view, however, was the determination of the time of death. The French translator and popularizer of his works from Latin, Jean-Jacques Bruhier (1685–1756),¹⁴ treated this aspect of his work more specifically. In Bruhier's work, the transition from life to death was not a mere moment, but the period of time during which it is possible to return to the community of the living.¹⁵ This new concept of death is closely related to the category of so-called 'seeming death.' Bruhier was the first scholar to classify causes of such apparent death by the term 'accident.' In addition to the plague and to acute, convulsive, and contagious diseases, he described other typical causes such as drowning, asphyxiation by hanging, noxious fumes, voluntary and involuntary euphoric states, or injuries of various kinds. His research included a wide variety of sources with varying degrees of credibility, from personal testimonies, chronicles, travelogues, and accounts of miraculous incidents of the seventeenth century to legal and medical writings.¹⁶

The Italian historian Claudio Milanesi conducted an analysis of published cases of miraculous recoveries. From them, he developed a typology of stories, which represent contemporary thought patterns. The rescued victims were usually women, from which Bruhier concluded that females were particularly vulnerable to seeming death. In addition to the woman whose husband buried her but who was then discovered by her lover to be alive in the tomb,¹⁷ there

13 Milanesi, *Morte apparente* (see note 10), 23–24.

14 Bruhier significantly extended Winslōw's work by adding 268 historical and contemporary cases of seeming death. His book was extremely widely read and went into at least three English editions, some of them printed in Dublin. See Milanesi, *Morte apparente* (see note 10), 29–30.

15 Bruhier was apparently of the opinion that a person might live for quite a long time in the absence of both heartbeat and respiration. He mentioned the example of a Swedish gardener from Drottningholm Castle outside Stockholm, who had fallen through the ice and become lodged underneath. He survived for sixteen hours before a boatman thrust a hook into his head with great force, to pull him up alive. See Jan Bondeson, *A Cabinet of Medical Curiosities* (Ithaca, NY, and New York: Cornell University Press, 1997), 99–100.

16 Milanesi, *Morte apparente* (see note 10), 30–64.

17 A well-known example was one story in Boccaccio's *Decameron* (ca. 1350), specifically the account of Messer Gentile de'Carisendi, who on his way from Modena rescued a woman, whom he loved and who was buried alive, from a tomb: "Avenne che subitamente un fiero accidente la soprapprese, il quale fu tale e di tanta forza, che in lei spense ogni segno di vita, e per ciò eziando da alcun medico morta giudicata fu; e per ciò che le sue più congiunte parenti dicevan sé

were wives risen from the dead whose husbands considered them to be apparitions, the dead women awakened by thieves, and rescued hanged women¹⁸ were the most common narratives.¹⁹ In this collection of ‘clinical cases,’ the physician appeared only rarely. This is most likely due to the anecdotal origin of these stories, but also to the fact that physicians were not much involved in the process of human dying until the eighteenth century.²⁰

In Bruhier’s treatise on the new discourse on death, the credibility of the sources used, even in the case of quite incredible events, was not really significant. It was a completely new perspective on the issue of the uncertain nature of death, and through this perspective the rationalization of the miracle stories enabled these cases to be classified in various medical categories. The scientific community adopted this work with enthusiasm,²¹ and it sparked a debate about the dangers of seeming death, which marked the real beginning of the process of medicalization. Contemporary medicine was soon dominated by vast new areas of interest. In addition to the research concerning marginal cases between life and death there was the search for more specific diagnostic methods and the development of resuscitation techniques, which could revive the person suffering from seeming death. The rationalization of old stories meant, in the history of medicine, a turning point for the scientific classification of death. The doctor first and later the whole community of the living were to take an active and involved approach to this matter. A few decades later,

avere avuto da lei non essere ancora di tanto tempo gravida, che perfetta potesse essere la creatura, senza altro impaccio darsi, quale ella era, in uno avello d’una chiesa ivi vicina dopo molto pianto la seppellirono. (. . .) colà pervenne dove sepellita era la donna; ed aperta la sepoltura, in quella diligentemente entrò, e pòstolesi a giacere allato, il suo viso a quello della donna accostò, e più volte con molte lagrime, piagnendo, il baciò. (...) Deh! Perché non le tocco io, poi che io son qui, un poco il petto? Io non la debbo mai più toccare, né mai più la toccai. Vinto adunque da questo appetito, le mise la mano in seno, e per alquanto spazio tenùtalavi, gli parve sentire alcuna cosa battere il cuore a costei, il quale, poi che ogni paura ebbe cacciata da sé, con più sentimento cercando, trovò costei per certo non esser morta, quantunque poca e debole estimasse la vita.” See Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron* (con le xilografie dell’edizione del 1492), ed. Mario Marti and Elena Ceva Valla. Radici BUR (Milan: Biblioteca Universale Rizzoli, 2007), 669–70 (*Day Ten: The Fourth Story*).

18 These women were usually sentenced to death because of infanticide. See Milanese, *Morte apparente* (see note 10), 48–9.

19 Milanese, *Morte apparente* (see note 10), 44–51.

20 Roy Porter, *The Greatest Benefit to Mankind: A Medical History of Humanity*. The Norton History of Science (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1999), 241–42.

21 Bruhier had also some opponents. The Paris physician Antoine Louis (1723–1792) held him responsible for the hysteria in France regarding premature burial. See Bondeson, *A Cabinet of Medical Curiosities* (see note 15), 100.

death would be overseen not only by the reforms of the medical police,²² but also by the proactive role of the physician supervising the dying and the dead.²³

However, Bruhier's treatise had a controversial impact on its readers. On the one hand, he tried to mitigate the metaphysical fear of dying by explaining death rationally; on the other hand, he attracted unprecedented attention to the phenomenon of seeming death, which up to then only lived in the collective imagination of the European rural community, in the form of resurrections or the frightful return of the 'unclean dead.'²⁴ During the next few decades Bruhier helped spread the terror of being buried alive, which permeated European society.²⁵

That the fear of being buried alive was common is attested by the popularity of the theme in the works of fiction during the nineteenth century. The phenomenon of seeming death as a source of horror plots was widespread at these times

²² See the references in note 5.

²³ According to Marina Sozzi, the enlightened doctor, in the imagination of contemporary medicine, would replace relatives and the priest at the deathbed. See Sozzi, "Il medico contro la morte" (see note 12), 96. Dealing with the active approach of medicine toward the dead body, specifically Milanese, *Morte apparente* (see note 10), 209; 221–28.

²⁴ Alfonso M. Di Nola, *La nera signora: Antropologia della morte e del lutto*. I Big Newton: Saggi – Antropologia, 53 (Rome: Newton Compton Editori, 2006), 201–18. Di Nola focused on warnings of the Catholic Church with regards to seeming death. He pointed out the formula of pre-Trident Roman ritual, which prescribed the sprinkling of holy water on the dead, not to be cleansed of sin, but as exorcising demons in the case of the living (*cadavere vivente*). Concerning resurrection of the revenants, see Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Les revenants: Les vivants et les morts dans la société médiévale*. Bibliothèque des histoires (Paris: Gallimard, 1994); Claude Lecouteux, *Fantômes et revenants au Moyen-Âge*. L'Arbre à mémoire (Paris: Imago, 1986); Otto Gerhard Oexle, "Die Gegenwart der Toten," *Death in the Middle Ages*, ed. Herman Braet and Werner Verbeke. Mediaevalia Lovaniensia, Series 1 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1983), 19–77; Nancy Caciola, "Wraiths, Revenants, and Ritual in Medieval Culture," *The Past and Present Society* 152 (1996): 3–45. On several occasions, particularly on the periphery of the Habsburg Empire during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, dead people were suspected of being revenants or vampires, and consequently dug up and destroyed. Some contemporary authors named this phenomenon *Magia Posthuma*. It is also a title of a book written by the Catholic lawyer Karl Ferdinand von Schertz (died in 1724). See *MAGIA POSTHUMA PER JURIDICUM ILLUD PRO & CONTRA Suspensio Nonnullibi JUDICIO Investigata à CAROLO FERDINANDO DE SCHERTZ, AERÆ SALUTIFERÆ UBI paCIsCenDVM* (Olomouc: Typis Ignatij Rosenburg, 1704); Giuseppe Maiello, *Vampyrismus a Magia posthuma: Vampyrismus v kulturních dějinách Evropy a Magia posthuma Karla Ferdinanda Schertze (první novodobé vydání)* (Prague: Epocha, 2014). As to the vampirism see Bruce McClelland, *Slayers and Their Vampires: A Cultural History of Killing the Dead* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2006); Tommaso Braccini, *Prima di Dracula: Archeologia del vampiro*. Saggi, 761 (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2011); Paul Barber, *Vampires, Burial and Death: Folklore and Reality* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 1988).

²⁵ Claudio Milanese, "Tra la vita e la morte: Religione, cultura popolare e medicina nella seconda metà del 700," *Quaderni storici* 50 (1982): 615–28, pursues the same critical approach.

as exemplified by the work of Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849). We can recall the famous story *The Fall of the House of Usher* from 1839, in which Lady Madeline Usher, suffering from an unknown ailment²⁶ is buried alive:

“Not hear it? – Yes, I hear it, and have heard it. Long – long – long – many minutes, many hours, many days, have I heard it – yet I dared not – oh, pity me, miserable wretch that I am! – I dared not – I dared not speak! We have put her living in the tomb! Said I not that my senses were acute? I now tell you that I heard her first feeble movements in the hollow coffin. I heard them – many, many days ago – yet I dared not speak! [...] Oh whither shall I fly? Will she not be here anon? Have I not heard her footstep on the stair? Do I not distinguish that heavy and horrible beating of her heart? [...] The huge antique panels to which the speaker pointed, threw slowly back, upon the instant, their ponderous and ebony jaws. It was the work of the rushing gust—but then without those doors there did stand the lofty and enshrouded figure of the lady Madeline of Usher. There was blood upon her white robes, and the evidence of some bitter struggle upon every portion of her emaciated frame.”²⁷

Poe’s text reflects the passion which the topic aroused in contemporary fiction. The popularity of this theme and its frequent representation in literature²⁸ and art²⁹ throughout that time suggests that the risk of seeming death aroused a chill rather than an existential horror, as was the typical case for the end of

26 As described in the text itself: “The disease of the Lady Madeline had long baffled the skill of her physicians. A settled apathy, a gradual wasting away of her person, and frequent although transient affections of a partially cataleptic character, were the unusual diagnosis.” See Edgar Allan Poe, *The Fall of the House of Usher and Other Writings: Poems, Tales, Essays and Reviews*, ed. David Galloway. Penguin Classics (London: Penguin Books, 1986), 145.

27 Poe, *The Fall of the House of Usher and Other Writings* (see note 26), 156–57.

28 Gothic fiction, that protean genre first associated with a late eighteenth-century literature of excess, provided the sort of dark sensibility that helped naturalize stories of premature burial. See George K. Behlmer, “Grave Doubts: Victorian Medicine, Moral Panic, and the Signs of Death,” *Journal of British Studies* 42 (2003): 206–35; here 214. On the characteristics of Gothic fiction, see David Punter, *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day* (London and New York: Longman, 1980). From the period fiction consider, for instance, Matthew G. Lewis, *The Monk: A Romance* (London: printed for J. Bell, 1796); John Snart, *Thesaurus of Horror* (London: Sherwood, Neely, and Jones, 1817).

29 See, for instance, *The Premature Burial* (*L’Inhumation précipitée*, oil on canvas, 1854) by a Belgian romantic painter and sculptor, Antoine Joseph Wiertz (1806–1865). He depicted a cholera victim awakening after being placed in a coffin. More to Wiertz’s personality, see Clara Erskine Clement, “Antoine Joseph Wiertz. I. The Biography of the Artist,” *The American Art Review* 2 (1880), 13–18; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antoine_Wiertz; http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wiertz_burial.jpg; for copies of his images online, see http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/cas/fnart/art/wiertz.html (last accessed on April 15, 2015).

the eighteenth century. We also see the motif of seeming death in Czech fiction from the same period.³⁰

In the context of the history of medicine, it is remarkable to analyze who played the role of the resuscitator in the stories of the dead and what the role of the doctor was. On the other hand, as a witness to the persistently obsessive nature of this issue, there are tens of medical writings and there are many examples of individuals grappling with this new interpretation of seeming death in contemporary educational periodicals. Although this topic constituted a sort of sensationalism, the literary texts from the beginning of the nineteenth century approached this topic quite seriously and disclosed actual cases of unexpected 'resurrections.' Especially because of its experimental character, the issue was immensely popular with various writers of that era.³¹ The motif of seeming death combined the contemporary interest in sensory experiences with physical manifestations of emotions.³² The feelings of the seeming dead were analyzed and descri-

30 Used, for instance, by Karel Sabina in his Romantic tale *Hrobník*, published in *Květy* in 1837; Jan Neruda in *Doktor Kazisvět* (1876), Alois Jirásek in the fifth chapter of the first volume of *F. L. Věk* (1890), or Ignát Hermann in the story *Beneficiant* in 1909. In the case of Jirásek, derived from recollections of F. V. Hek, it is possible to consider the story of the seeming death of the librarian Mathias Weinitzier, an actual historical event. Regarding the subject of seeming death in Czech fiction, see Prokop Málek, *Sondy pod povrch lékařské vědy* (Prague: Avicenum 1983), 340–47.

31 The same type of the English Gothic novel, which was also very popular in German-speaking countries at the time, is called *Schauerroman* (horror novel) in German literature. One of its types is *Geisterroman* (Novel of Spirits). *Geisterromane* are novels that take up the central theme of supernatural phenomena such as necromancy, curses, demonic possession and seeming death. Two forms are used in dealing with the supernatural; supernatural which is taken to be real within the stories, and rationally explained supernatural. This genre consists of numerous works such as those written by Joseph Alois Gleich (1772–1841), *Wendelin von Höllenstein oder die Todenglocke: Eine Geistergeschichte* (Vienna and Prague: Franz Hans, 1798); Christian Heinrich Spiess (1755–1799), *Die zwölf schlafenden Jungfrauen: Eine Geistergeschichte* (Leipzig: August Geers Buchhändler, 1795–1796); Christian Heinrich Spiess, *Die Geheimnisse der alten Ägypten: Eine wahre Zauber- und Geistergeschichte des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts* (Leipzig: Friedrich August Leo, 1798–1799); Ignaz Ferdinand Arnold, *Das Bildniß mit den Blutflecken: Eine Geistergeschichte nach einer wahren Anekdote* (Zerbst: Andreas Füchsel, 1800).

32 The eighteenth-century sentimental novel celebrated the emotional and intellectual concepts of sentiment, sentimentalism, and sensibility. The novelists were also interested in physical manifestations of emotions. We can mention, for instance, *La religieuse* (The Nun) written by Denis Diderot in 1760 (published in 1796); *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (The Sorrows of Young Werther) by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1774); *A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy* by Laurence Sterne (1768).

bed in detail, especially the acoustic sensations. Seeming death became internalized, which was indicative of the mentality of the Enlightenment-era.³³

According to Philippe Ariès, there were three periods during which doctors were concerned with seeming death: first the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, second the eighteenth century, and third the late nineteenth century.³⁴ While scholars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries believed that the dead body exhibited some signs of life, they considered life and death as two incompatible states. The miracle corpses (*De miraculis mortuorum*) of Christian Friedrich Garmann, a seventeenth-century German Lutheran doctor,³⁵ were replaced in the medical literature by the seeming dead a few decades later, as the view of their followers from the eighteenth century was the opposite with live people being threatened by seeming death. The doctors of the late nineteenth century, however, rejected the idea that seeming death represented a real danger, seeing it as a superstition.³⁶

Garmann's writings in Latin from 1670 can be considered one of the earliest German milestones on the road to the field of thanatology, providing a summary of the specific historical and anthropological perspectives on the issue of mortality of the human body and its parts. It contains a number of elements of the Baroque historical-anthropological discourse on the body. Garmann tried to create a work of encyclopedic character. He gathered all available contemporary scholarly and non-scholarly knowledge on the topic. As a well-read author he referred to texts of previous writers, but he also was versed in the findings of contemporary

33 We can find this kind of stereotype and the popularization of contemporary medical knowledge regarding these issues in the Czech journals of the early Czech National Revival movement, see Lenka Kusáková, "Tematizace strašidel a zdánlivé smrti v české beletrii raného obrození (1786–1830) jako reflexe osvěcenského zájmu o fyziologický aspekt emocí," *Estetika* 37 (2001): 116–26; here 119–22.

34 Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death* (see note 2), 403.

35 Christian Friedrich Garmann (19 January 1640, Merseburg–15 July 1708, Chemnitz). He graduated in medicine from the University of Leipzig in 1667, and was town physician in Chemnitz. Garmann was dismissed by the authors of medical biographies of the late eighteenth century as a credulous writer who believed the most absurd stories. His work was published posthumously by his son, also a doctor, under the curious title *De miraculis mortuorum*. See Philippe Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death* (see note 2), 354. As to the contemporary German edition of his work with comments, see Christian Friedrich Garmann, *De Miraculis Mortuorum: Über die Wunder[dinge] der Toten*. Facsimile der Originalausgabe und Nachwort der Herausgeber, ed. Silvio Benetello and Bernd Herrmann (Göttingen: Universitätsdrucke Göttingen, 2003). See also http://www.uni-mannheim.de/mateo/cera/autoren/garmann_cera.html (last accessed on Oct. 5, 2014).

36 Late nineteenth-century medicine adopted the thesis that death does not exist in itself but is merely the separation of the soul and the body, the distortion or absence of life. Death became pure negativity. The idea that premature burials represented a real danger was considered as non-scientific in medical circles. See Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death* (see note 2), 403.

science. Unlike eighteenth-century doctors, he was not interested in the clinical-scientific phenomena, but in their reception. The title of his work underlines his belief in the importance of studying miracles at the expense treating the state of seeming death as a predicament.³⁷

According to Garmann, corpses were endowed with miraculous properties. In his work, he dealt with such phenomena as hair-, teeth-, and nail-growth after death, bleeding of the cadaver in the presence of the murderer, and erection of the penis. Surprisingly, he considered the devil to be responsible for the cause of natural events. He similarly attributed the sounds coming from coffins and graves, which were corroborated by earlier testimonies and his own personal experience, to the effect of demonic forces.³⁸

The Time of Reforms

Medical discourse on death in the 1740s changed the previous paradigm of miraculous cadavers into living but seemingly dead ones. The focus of Winsløw's and Bruhier's predecessors was the actual death itself, and the deceased human body was a source of knowledge about life and health. Lack of interest

37 When Garmann tells an extraordinary story, he adds a skeptical and rational commentary, but his reservations do not prevent him from giving all the details. In fact, he accepts the thesis of the sensibility of the cadaver. See Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death* (see note 2), 356; Garmann, *De Miraculis Mortuorum* (see note 35), 284–86.

38 “Ganz neu und ungewöhnlich ist es nicht, an Särgen und Gräbern unartikulierte Geräusche zu vernehmen. Daß am Grabe Elisas’, Johannes’ des Täufers und Abdias’ Dämonen zu brüllen pflegten, belegt das Zeugnis des Hieronymus (*ad Eustach. de vit. Paulae*). Simonetta (l.5.c.50.) hat angemerkt, daß die Knochen des Papstes Sylvesters II. im Sarg klapperten. Daß Dämonen die Leiche des Valentinus, des Verteidigers der Ketzer, nächstens mit dumpfem Geräusch aus der heiligen Grabstätte zerrten. (...) Das Geräusch eines Klopfenden haben im Jahre 1665 in Lützen aus dem Grabe eines Schusters Stockmann (*Hodoget. pestil. q.14. p.125.*) und wir einst mit anderen in Merseburg bei der Bestattung eines Mannes, welcher dem Römisch-Katholischen Glauben anhing, mit diesen [unseren eigenen Ohren oder genannten Ohrenzeugen (?)] vernommen.” See Christian Friedrich Garmann, *De Miraculis Mortuorum* (see note 24), 95–96. “It is not completely new and unusual to hear an inarticulate noise by the coffins and graves. A testimony was brought by Hieronymus (*ad Eustach. de vit. Paulae*) that the demons used to roar near the graves of Elisa, John the Baptist, and Obadiah. Simonetta (l.5.c.50.) noted that the bones of the Pope Sylvester II clattered in the coffin. The demons dragged the corpse of Saint Valentine, defender of heretics, from the holy tomb with muffled noise at night. We and some others once heard this noise of knocking during the burial of one man in Merseburg who had adhered to the Roman Catholic faith. The same noise could be heard from the grave of the shoemaker Stockmann in Lützen in 1665,” Garmann, *De Miraculis Mortuorum* (see note 35), 95–96.

in the cause of death led to a passive medical attitude toward the dead. The questioning of the boundaries between the living and the dead, the findings regarding seeming death, attempts to classify causes of this condition, and even attempts to cure it, all created the preconditions for the active attitude of doctors toward death. According to the historian Marina Sozzi, medicine during the Enlightenment rather encouraged the fear of seeming death. They used it to highlight the fact that the skills of a professional during the last moments of life will become necessary in the near future.³⁹

New insights about the uncertainty of symptoms of death governed the effort to put into practice binding hygienic legal standards. Jean-Jacques Bruhier had already prepared the *Projet de règlement* (1745), where he called for a radical change in burial customs in France, previously left to the discretion of family members and parishes. He criticized the premature burial and promoted new practical measures, which included, for example, the obligation to keep the deceased on the death bed, not to obstruct respiratory passages, and not to place the cadaver in the coffin before signs of physical decay were showing. At the time of transition from life to death all known contemporary medical diagnostic means and resuscitation procedures should also be applied. In Bruhier's opinion, the 'new' position of the doctor was already clear. He was soon to become the central figure at the bedside of the dying, and was thus empowered to discredit the monopoly held by spiritual persons up to that time.⁴⁰

It was not until the 1770s that efforts to enforce the said security steps were introduced into everyday life in France and in German-speaking lands in the form of specific legal measures. The time interval between death and burial was set. It was generally a mandatory time-limit of forty-eight hours. Furthermore, a compulsory medical examination of the dead, which aimed at identifying whether death was natural or violent and to detect infectious diseases, could be implemented.⁴¹

Key players in the successful propaganda against premature burials were, for example, the French physicians Jean Janin de Combe-Blanche (1731–1799)

³⁹ Sozzi, *Il medico* (see note 12), 89–90.

⁴⁰ Milanese, *Morte apparente* (see note 10), 29. In 1743 Bruhier stated the requirement for the establishment of a bureau for the observation of the deceased. A decree of the twenty-first of Vendémiaire, Year IX, advised, "Persons who shall find themselves near a sick man at the time of his presumed decease shall in future refrain from covering him and wrapping his face, removing him from his bed, and laying him on a straw or horsehair mattress, thereby exposing him to too cold an air." The quote is borrowed from Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death* (see note 2), 401.

⁴¹ At the end of 1770s, the concept of the *Medizinische Polizey* started to be appear in the German-speaking lands. See note 5.

and Joseph-Jacques de Gardanne (1726–1786) and, in the Habsburg realm, a German physician of French origin, Johann Peter Frank (1745–1821).⁴² In Frank's opinion, the issue of seeming death was integral to all hygienic and legal reforms. He paid much attention not only to the signs of death, but also to the most common causes of seeming death, as well as to preventive measures, resurrection techniques and rescue devices.⁴³

The Rescue Companies

A bright side in the dark topic of seeming death was the birth of the rescue companies, the predecessors of today's first aid and rescue services. The first rescue associations focused on helping drowning and drowned victims (Figs. 1 and 2).

They began to form after 1770 in France. In 1772 the Institute of Philippe Nicolas Pia (1721–1799) was founded in Paris to support the victims of drowning.⁴⁴ Hamburg specialized in the large-scale production of new rescue equipment,⁴⁵ and the London Humane Society was focusing on bringing new rescue techniques into the curriculum of medical students. Resuscitation techniques usually focused on warming up the body and restoring the breathing of the drowned.⁴⁶ Tools such as pumps, needles, and bellows were gradually adopted (Figs. 3 and 4).⁴⁷

In Britain, the great boost to performing mouth-to-mouth resuscitation for the seemingly dead came from William Tossach's 1744 documentation of his

⁴² Frank, *Johann Peter: Seine Selbstbiographie*, ed. Erna Lesky. Hubers Klassiker der Medizin und der Naturwissenschaften, 12 (Bern and Stuttgart: Hans Huber, 1969); Rüdiger Haag, *Johann Peter Frank (1745–1821) und seine Bedeutung für die öffentliche Gesundheit*. Schriftenreihe Schriften zur Ideen- und Wissenschaftsgeschichte, 6 (Hamburg: Verlag Dr. Kovač, 2011).

⁴³ Johann Peter Frank, *System einer vollständigen medicinischen Polizey fünfter Band: Von Sicherheits-Anstalten, in so weit sie das Gesundheitswesen angehen, und von Beerdigung der Todten* (Tübingen: Cotta, 1813).

⁴⁴ Philippe-Nicolas Pia, *Détail des succès de l'établissement que la ville de Paris a fait en faveur des personnes noyées & qui a été dans diverses provinces de France* (Paris: A. M. Lottin, 1777).

⁴⁵ Johann Arnold Günther, *Geschichte und itzige Einrichtung der Hamburgischen Rettungs-Anstalten für im Wasser verunglückte Menschen* (Hamburg: Carl Ernst Bohn, 1794).

⁴⁶ Milanese, *Morte apparente* (see note 10), 221–28; Ľúta Červeňanská, *Prvé obdobie vývoja resuscitácie* (Bratislava: Vydavateľstvo Slovenskej akadémie vied, 1973), 36–65.

⁴⁷ Mickey S. Eisenberg and Peter Baskett and Douglas Chamberlain, "A History of Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation," *Cardiac Arrest: The Science and Practice of Resuscitation Medicine*, ed. Norman A. Paradis, Henry R. Halperin, Karl B. Kern, Volker Wenzel, and Douglas A. Chamberlain. Second edition (1996; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 3–25; here 5–6.

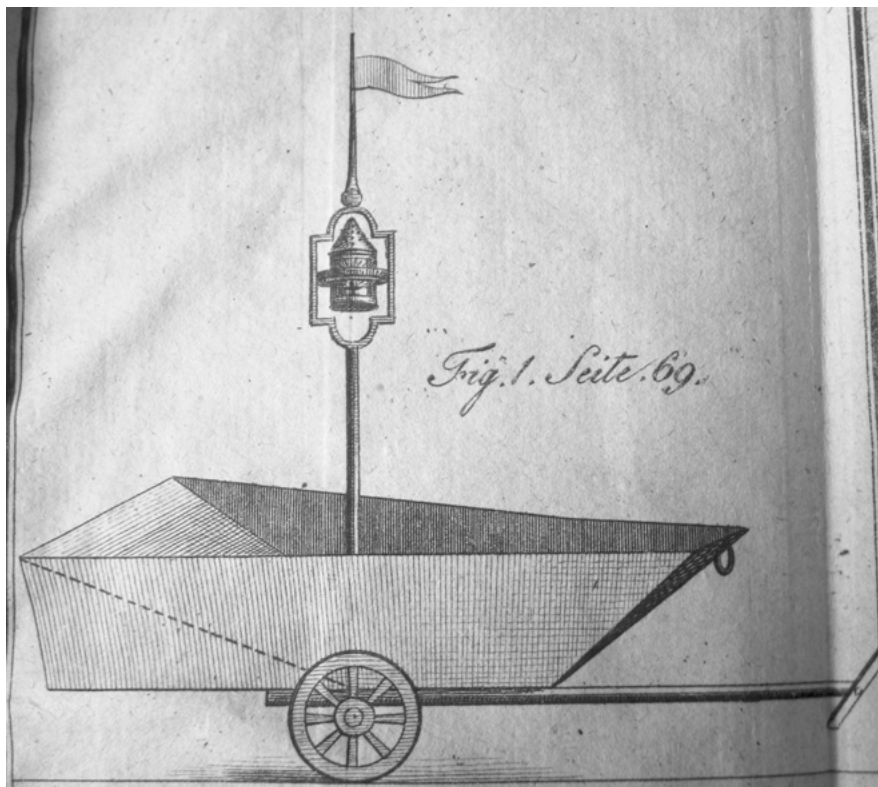


Fig. 1: A lifeboat with a lantern for saving a drowning person, Adalbert Vinzenz Zarda, *Patriotischer Wunsch für die Wiederbelebung der todtscheinenden Menschen, damit Niemand lebendig begraben werde*, 1797, Tab II., Fig. 1.

own successful case,⁴⁸ and then from the promotion by an English physician, John Fothergill (1712–1780). The founding of The London Humane Society in

48 On 3 December 1732, at Alloa, Scotland, local surgeon William Tossach (1700–1771) resuscitated a suffocated coal-pit miner, James Blair, by mouth-to-mouth rescue breathing. The technique is believed to have been in use from ancient times, so Tossach was probably not the first to utilize expired air ventilation. However, he left what appears to be the first clinical description of the procedure in the medical literature, which he wrote twelve years later (“A Man Dead in Appearance, Recovered by Distending the Lungs with Air,” *Medical Essays and Observations* 5 [1744]: 108–11.). See Bart Jan Meursing, “The History of Resuscitation,” *Handbook on Drowning: Prevention. Rescue. Treatment*, ed. Joost J. L. M. Bierens (Berlin and Heidelberg: Springer-Verlag, 2006), 14–21; here 14–15; Luke Davidson, “The Kiss of Life in the

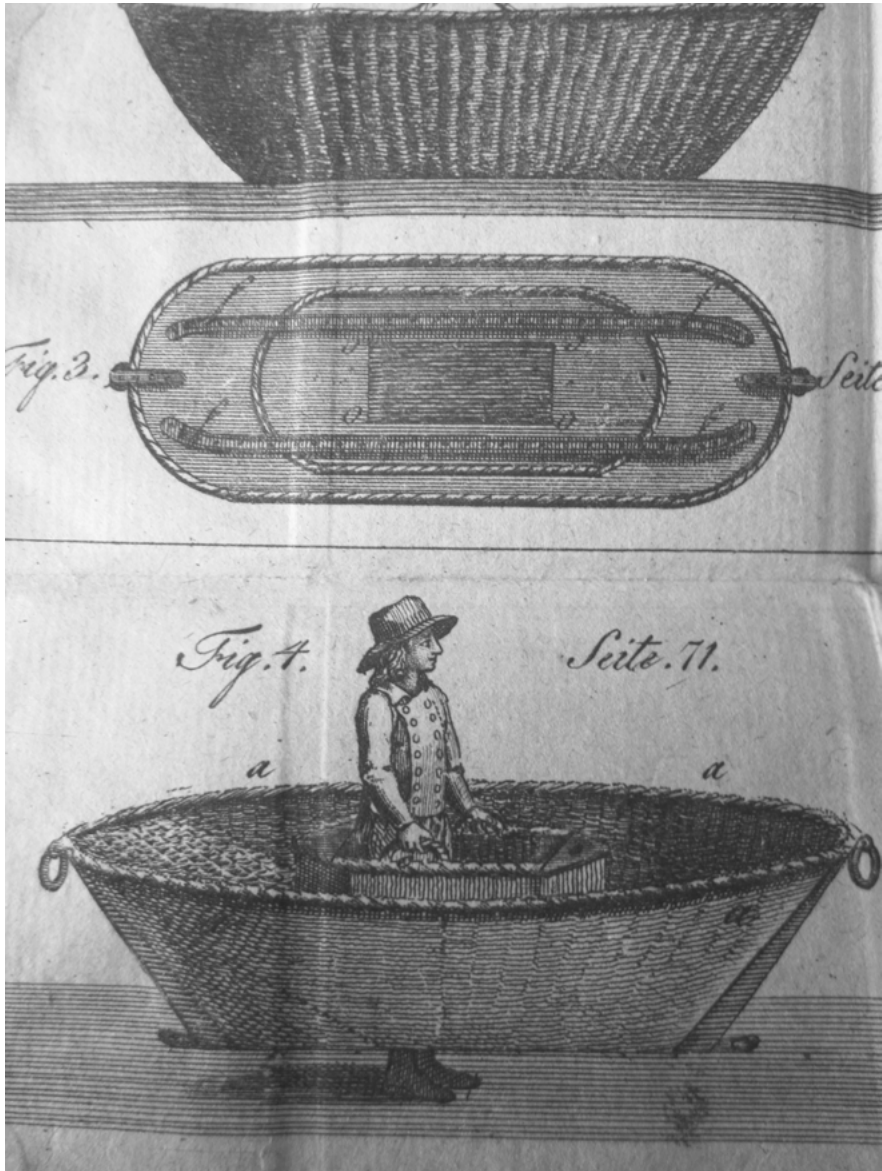


Fig. 2: An iceboat for saving a drowning person, Adalbert Vinzenz Zarda, *Patriotischer Wunsch für die Wiederbelebung der todtscheinenden Menschen, damit Niemand lebendig begraben werde*, 1797, Tab II., Fig. 2, 3, 4.

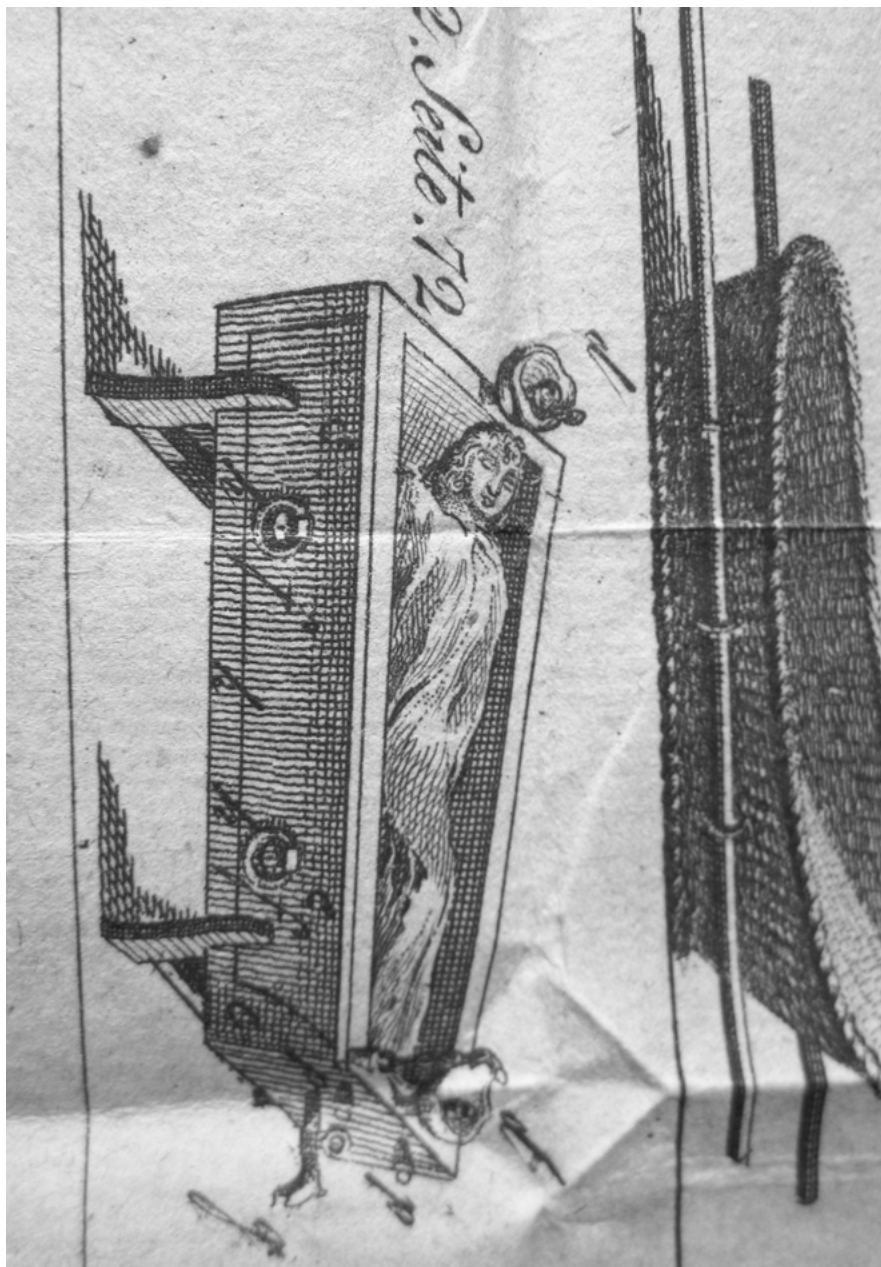


Fig. 3: A machine for warming up a seemingly dead person, Adalbert Vinzenz Zarda, *Patriotischer Wunsch für die Wiederbelebung der todtscheinenden Menschen, damit Niemand lebendig begraben werde*, 1797, Tab II., Fig. 11 and Fig. 12.

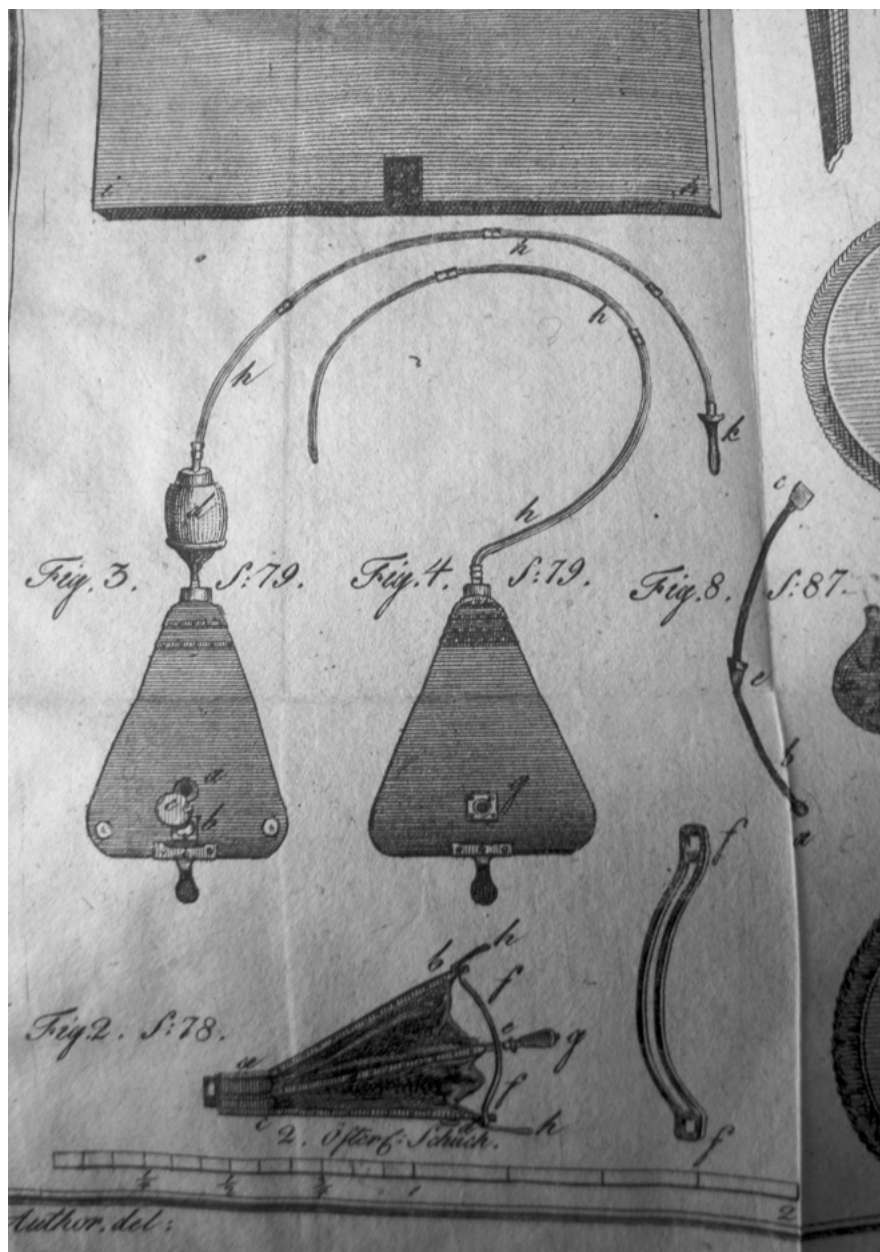


Fig. 4: Bellows for restoring the breathing of a drowned, Adalbert Vinzenz Zarda, *Patriotischer Wunsch für die Wiederbelebung der todtscheinenden Menschen, damit Niemand lebendig begraben werde*, 1797, Tab. III., Fig. 2 and Fig. 3.

1774 was followed by earnest efforts to promote mouth-to-mouth expired air ventilation in England, and soon after in Scotland, but not until the 1780s in North America.⁴⁹ The need to apply artificial ventilation immediately was not really recognized before John Hunter's (1728–1793) recommendation to the London Humane Society in 1776. Charles Kite (1760?–1811) spelt out clearly the principles of resuscitation in 1787–1788.⁵⁰ Around 1780 medical science began to pay attention to seeming death due to suffocation, and soon resuscitation techniques involved early experiments with electricity. Thanks to medical developments and contemporary publicity the new knowledge spread across the whole Europe (Fig. 5).⁵¹

In 1857 Marshall Hall (1790–1857), an English physician and physiologist advanced the chest pressure method, which was modified in 1861 by Henry Robert Silvester (1829–1908) to become the chest pressure/arm lift method in supine patients.⁵² Rescue of the seeming dead established itself as a practical and theoretical medical discipline in Bohemia, particularly in Prague, where in the years 1790–1848 lectures on the subject were held for the general public.⁵³ The first

Eighteenth Century: The Fate of an Ambiguous Kiss," *The Kiss in History*, ed. Karen Harvey (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2005), 98–121; here 98–99.

49 Ronald Trubuhovich, "History of Mouth-To-Mouth Rescue Breathing. Part 2: The 18th Century," *Critical Care and Resuscitation: Journal of the Australasian Academy of Critical Care Medicine* 8 (2006): 157–71.

50 Charles Kite (baptized 1760?–1811) was an English doctor, surgeon and scientist. He had noticed the high incidence of drowned victims and recognized the need to prevent and treat people who were in "suspended animation." He was an active member of the London Humane Society. In 1788 he wrote *An Essay on the Apparently Dead* (London: Printed for C. Dilly in the Poultry), for which he was awarded the Silver Medal given by the Society. See Mickey S. Eisenberg, "Charles Kite's Essay on the Recovery of the Apparently Dead: The First Scientific Study of Sudden Death," *Annals of Emergency Medicine: An International Journal* 23 (1994): 1049–53; Ana Graciela Alzaga, Joseph Varon, and Peter Baskett, "Charles Kite: The Clinical Epidemiology of Sudden Cardiac Death and the Origin of the Early Defibrillator," *Resuscitation: Official Journal of the European Resuscitation Council* 64 (2005): 7–12.

51 Milanesi, *Morte apparente* (see note 10), 221–228.

52 Nicole LaHood and Talal Moukabary, "History of Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation," *Cardiology Journal* 16 (2009): 487–88.

53 Ludmila Hlaváčková, "Vltava a záchrana zdánlivě mrtvých," *Město a voda: Praha, město u vody*, ed. Olga Fejtová and Václav Ledvinka and Jiří Pešek. Documenta Pragensia, 24 (Prague: Scriptorium, 2005), 433–437; Daniela Tinková, *Zákeřná mfeitis: Zdravotní policie, osvěta a veřejná hygiena v pozdně osvícenských Čechách*. Edice Každodenní život, 54 (Prague: Argo, 2012), 172–179.

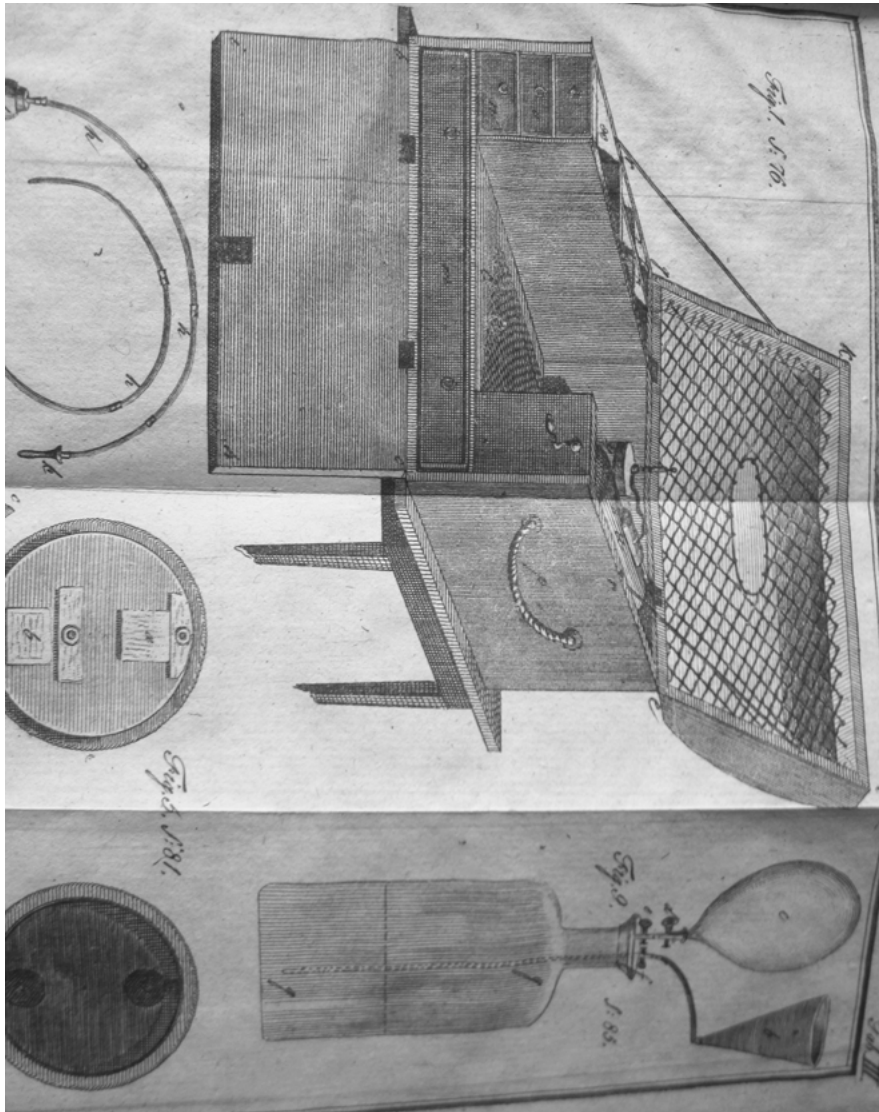


Fig. 5: Eighteenth-century travel medical chest, Adalbert Vinzenz Zarda, *Patriotischer Wunsch für die Wiederbelebung der todtscheinenden Menschen, damit Niemand lebendig begraben werde*, 1797, Tab. IV., Fig. 1.

lecturer was a major scientific authority in the field, the Czech professor of health police Adalbert Vinzenz Zarda (1755–1811).⁵⁴

The fact that fear of seeming death also affected the representatives of high society and educated elites was confirmed by Philippe Ariès, who already had noted the concerns of premature burial in the wills of the French nobility in the 1660s. The most common safety measure was to ensure sufficient time interval before burial.⁵⁵ The obsessive fear of being buried alive in the eighteenth century probably also affected the aristocratic society in Bohemia. A remarkable Old Prague legend dealing with seeming death can be found in the Czech historiography.

The main protagonist, a nobleman and a prominent diplomat at the court of Vienna in the early eighteenth century was one Jan Václav Wratislav of Mitrowicz (1669–1712). Throughout his life he allegedly had a recurring dream in which he thought he had died, but then to his horror had come to life again. In December 1712, this Supreme Chancellor of the Kingdom of Bohemia was pronounced dead in Vienna having suffered from dropsy. He was taken to Bohemia and placed in his family tomb in the Prague church of St. James. According to the legend, he revived in the tomb. Full of horror he banged the coffin cover against the tombstone for three days. People heard the hammering, but considered the sound to be the wrath of the evil spirit. The tomb was later opened, but it was too late; the count was really dead. His body lay stiff on the ground beside the coffin.⁵⁶

54 Adalbert Vinzenz Zarda, *Von dem Nutzen über die Rettungsmittel in plötzlichen Lebensgefahren Nichtärzten Unterricht zu geben, als Program zu den öffentlichen Vorlesungen über diesen Gegenstand vorgetragen im Karolin, den 4ten Wintermonat 1792* (Prague: Hladky, 1792); Adalbert Vinzenz Zarda, *Patriotischer Wunsch für die Wiederbelebung der todtscheinenden Menschen, damit Niemand lebendig begraben werde* (Prague: auf Kosten des Verfassers zur Beförderung der erwünschten Rettungsanstalt, 1797); Adalbert Vinzenz Zarda, *Zuschrift an meine Landsleute, Böhmen besonders an die Bewohner der Hauptstadt Prag die Rettungsanstalten der plötzlich verunglückten Menschen betreffend* (Prague: auf Kosten der Rettungsanstalt, 1799).

55 This interval was generally one or two days. The second precaution was to be left just as one was, without being touched for a certain period of time, or even forever. The last precaution was scarification (scratching, burning, superficial cutting). This was less common, but became more frequent at the end of the eighteenth century. Already in 1696 Elisabeth d'Orléans had given the following instruction: "Let me first be scratched twice with a razor on the soles of the feet." See Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death* (see note 2), 399–401.

56 See Julius Košnář, *Staropražské pověsti a legendy* (Prague: Vincentinum, 1933), 95–96.

The Time of Paradoxes

The collective horror of being buried alive was not the only paradox of Enlightenment-era medicalization concerning last things in human life. New medical discourse regarding the time of death was competing against the question of the harmfulness of cadaverous vapors. Even though this debate was occurring approximately at the same time, in the forties of the eighteenth century, it was slightly less intense (but historiographically it is generally more familiar). The dead body became a real danger, a source of contagious diseases and mephitic vapors that threatened the community of the living. Contemporary ideas and medical writings mention these vapors as often killing dozens. The fear of pernicious influence of the burying *ad sanctos et apud ecclesiam* (in the church and near the saints)⁵⁷ originated in France and led to the relocation of cemeteries outside the city walls in most European countries.⁵⁸ This new practice, however, contrasted sharply with the requirement to keep the dead body near the living and under their watchful eye. The essential complication in this context became the challenge to postpone the funeral for as long as possible—until physical degradation had set in, prosaically speaking. —This raised the question of what to do with the deceased, who could arouse at any time, yet could endanger public health?

It is obvious that in the discussions and the practices of European Enlightenment, as was also proven in the Czech lands by many funeral regulations by

57 Many of the earliest Christian churches were identified with the burial places of local saints, spawning a desire among many to be buried in the church and near the saint. This desire was directly related to the doctrine that on “the last day” of the world all corpses would rise to be rejoined with their souls and live again. One’s proximity to a saint itself was almost enough to guarantee a happy resurrection. See Joseph Patrick Byrne, *Daily Life during the Black Death*. The Greenwood Press “Daily Life Through History” Series (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 90–91.

58 See the outstanding contribution to this topic by Grazia Tomasi, *Per salvare i viventi: Le origini settecentesche del cimitero extraurbano*. Saggi, 550 (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2001). As to the broader discussion on this topic, see Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death* (see note 2), 317–21 (relocation of the Parisian cemeteries); Marina Sozzi and Charles Porset, *Il sonno e la memoria. Idee della morte e politiche funerarie nella Rivoluzione francese*. Saggi. Collana del Centro studi “Ariodante Fabretti” (Turin: Paravia, 1999); Renato Pasta, “Politica, medicina, religione e società nel dibattito settecentesco sulle sepolture,” *Società e storia* 98 (2002): 775–79; Julie Rugg, “Outside the Edict: The Chaotic Nature of Burial Culture in the United Kingdom,” *Der bürgerliche Tod: Städtische Bestattungskultur von der Aufklärung bis zum frühen 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Claudia Denk and Johann Ziesemer. International Council on Monuments and Sites. Deutsches Nationalkomitee. Hefte des Deutschen Nationalkomitees (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2007), 11–16; Richard A. Etlin, *The Architecture of Death: The Transformation of the Cemetery in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1984).

the Habsburg Emperor Joseph II, the dead body was not only regulated by the rules of the health police, but also desecrated. It was the subject of a number of questions of hygienic or technical nature, as will be clarified further. The Czech kingdom followed the French regulations for the new requirements regarding the funeral with only a slight delay mainly due to the reform efforts of the enlightened absolutism of the Austrian Habsburgs.⁵⁹

The legal standards from the 1780s established the shortest period allowed between the time of death and the funeral, and a compulsory medical examination of the dead in the Habsburg monarchy.⁶⁰ The funeral reforms of Empress Maria Theresa, under the auspices of the court physician Gerhard van Swieten (1700–1772),⁶¹ concerned only the prohibition of burials of the newly deceased in the crypts of churches. The real and consistent implementations of funeral reforms, in the spirit of the Paris Parliament, did not occur in the Habsburg monarchy until the years 1781–1785, after the death of Maria Theresa. Joseph II, at first, per his Patent of Toleration, ordained a common burial ground for Catholics and Protestants. In a court decree of 7 February 1782 he prohibited burials in the crypts of churches within cities, which affected Vienna and, a year later, was extended to the whole of Austria. This was followed by the decree of August 23, 1784 regarding the removal of all buried corpses outside inhabited residential areas valid for the entire territory of the Habsburgs, and from September 2 of the same year also binding for Bohemia.⁶²

Several radical standard norms regarding the handling of the dead body, which encountered considerable resistance from government authorities, the bishop's consistory, and the population in general, were part of this decree. The deceased were placed naked in a sack and transported to the cemetery in parish coffins with a hinged bottom, which should have been provided by individual parishes in adequate number and sizes. After being dropped into a pit at the cemetery—a place that should no longer be visited on account of safety, according to

⁵⁹ In more detail, Johannes Wimmer, *Gesundheit, Krankheit und Tod im Zeitalter der Aufklärung: Fallstudien aus den habsburgischen Erbländern*. Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Neuere Geschichte Österreichs, 80 (Vienna and Cologne: Böhlau, 1991).

⁶⁰ Tomasi, *Per salvare i viventi* (see note 58), 53–59; Tinková, *Zákeřná mefitis* (see note 53), 183–184.

⁶¹ See, for instance, Wilibald Müller, *Gerhard van Swieten: Biographischer Beitrag zur Geschichte der Aufklärung in Österreich* (Vienna: Wilhelm Braumüller, 1883); *Gerhard van Swieten und seine Zeit*, ed. Erna Lesky and Adam Wandruszka. Studien zur Geschichte der Universität Wien, 8 (Vienna, Cologne, and Graz: Böhlau, 1973).

⁶² Tomasi, *Per salvare i viventi* (see note 58), 199–206; Tinková, *Zákeřná mefitis* (see note 53), 189–193.

the health police, the bag was covered with lime. There were to be no separate chapels at the cemetery, only simple crosses, which were to adorn the coffin as well to satisfy the religious dimension of death. To commemorate the deceased there were only stone slabs crowded at the boundary wall of new cemeteries. The goal of these measures was the fastest possible decomposition of the body. Sturdy coffins and tombstones would greatly inhibit the recycling of bodies.⁶³

The Josephine cemeteries were the fulfillment of the ideas of the Paris Parliament and the ideals of Francis III d'Este (1698–1780), who tried to implement a similar vision in the Italian city of Modena. It perfectly divided the living from the dead, whose bodies had nothing to say and should be looked upon only as mere “stinking carcasses” and had to be gotten rid of as soon as possible. Josephine regulation attacked the very commemoration of the dead and their remains. Due to the radical backlash, however, in 1785 the emperor was forced to lift the ban on interment in a coffin, and soon afterwards had to retreat from the demands of privileged social groups that advocated the construction of their own burial monuments, or at least their family graves.⁶⁴

The Morgue

The brutality of the Josephine reforms had ultimately quite an unexpected impact in the Habsburg empire: they provoked the birth of the middle-class commemoration of the individual grave, the place where lay the memory of the family, which replaced the religious memory *ad sanctos et apud ecclesiam*. Despite the collapse of the most radical elements of the funeral reforms, Josephine absolutism accomplished two things. The corpses of peasants were forced out of the churches as a result of the funeral reforms from the eighties of the eighteenth century and the newly deceased rested in the new cemeteries—decomposition locations outside the city walls. Their geographic location, layout, height of walls, depth of graves, or the suitability of particular types of greenery were the focus and objective of detailed research of the contemporary health police, as can also be learned from Johann Peter Frank in 1813.⁶⁵

In the medical circles the Josephine reforms were cited as an example to emulate. But in reality it was the culmination of decades of efforts in medical de-

63 Tinková, *Zákeřná mefitis* (see note 53), 193–197; Václav Grubhoffer, *Pod závojem smrti: Poslední věci Schwarzenbergů v letech 1732–1914* (České Budějovice: Společnost pro kulturní dějiny, 2013), 47–49.

64 Tomasi, *Per salvare i viventi* (see note 58), 211–216.

65 Frank, *System einer vollständigen medizinischen Polizey fünfter Band* (see note 43), 417–31.

bate regarding death that dictated regulation of the dead body. In the Austrian context, we can note, for example, the dissertation of Joseph Habermann,⁶⁶ where he responded to a regulation from 1771 by the empress Maria Theresa, in which she calls for an investigation regarding the safety of burials in churches and crypts and, in the event of unsatisfactory results, asks to annul this regulation. Habermann analyzed the situation in Vienna, especially in St. Stephen's Cathedral, and described the danger of mephitic vapors and their connection to the spread of epidemic diseases; he pointed out that the most severe form of smallpox primarily struck churchgoers. Like Frank later, he promoted safety and protection of the living above the needs of commemoration and religion. The believers should not continue to be threatened by the vapors that spread throughout the floor of the crypts. He saw the best solution in ground burial.⁶⁷

Efforts to eliminate dead bodies from the society of the living faced the problem of seeming death. It was necessary to find a common area that could host the seemingly dead body and at the same time be the repository for the dangerous cadaver. It was necessary to invent a space where life and death could coexist safely away from living. A new 'institution,' the morgue (*Totenkammer/Leichenkammer/Scheintodkammer*), came into existence in the Habsburg monarchy by a court decree of 7 March 1771, stipulating that every church was to have at least a wooden one.⁶⁸

The development of actual 'funeral homes' for the seemingly dead (*Azylia dubiae vitae*) occurred at the turn of the eighteenth to the nineteenth century, especially in Germany.⁶⁹ The dead were stored in heated rooms equipped with a sophisticated system of bells that would ring if even the slightest movement was detected (Fig. 6).

⁶⁶ Josephus Habermann, *Dissertatio inauguralis medica de salubri sepultura* (Vienna: Typographeo Kaliwodiano, 1772); *Herrn Joseph Habermann, Med. Doct. Abhandlung von unschädlichen Begräbnissen, und den nachtheiligen Beerdigungen der Todten in den Kirchen und Städten. Aus dem Lateinischen übersetzt* (Vienna: Paul Krauss, 1773).

⁶⁷ Tomasi, *Per salvare i viventi* (see note 58), 55–59.

⁶⁸ Johann Dionis John, *Lexikon der k. k. Medizinalgeseze vierter Theil* (T–Z, Todtenkammern) (Prague: Johann Gottfried Calve, 1791), 32–33; Tinková, *Zákeřná mefitis* (see note 53), 186; Frank, *System einer vollständigen medizinischen Polizey fünfter Band* (see note 43), 452–56.

⁶⁹ In 1791, on the initiative of Christopher-Wilhelm Hufeland, one was built in Weimar, then one in Berlin in 1797, one in Mainz in 1803, and one in Munich in 1818. They were usually built as a structure of two separate rooms. One of them was intended for the apparently dead, the other, separated by a glass wall, served as the guard room, where an expert in the diagnosis and reviving of the seeming dead due to suffocation was stationed. See Milanese, *Morte apparente* (see note 10), 236–37; Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death* (see note 2), 401.

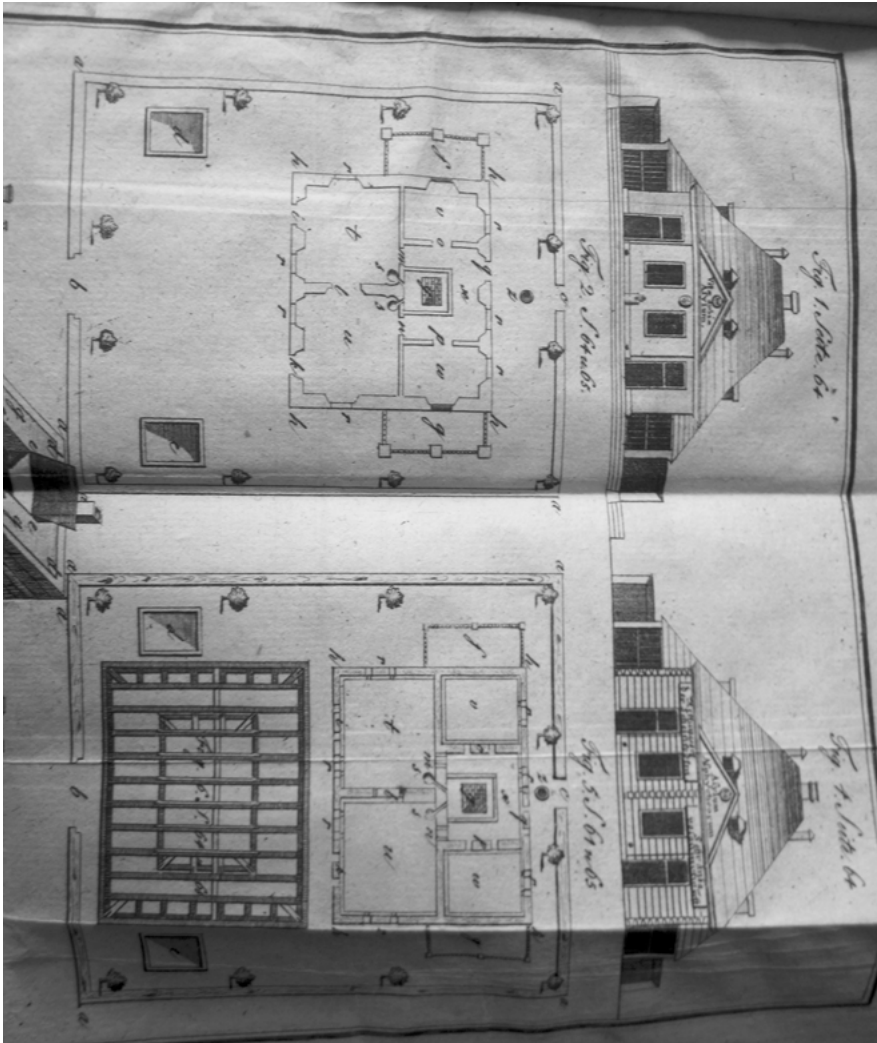


Fig. 6: A project of ‘funeral homes’ for the seemingly dead (*Azylia dubiae vitae*) in Prague, Adalbert Vinzenz Zarda, *Patriotischer Wunsch für die Wiederbelebung der todtscheinenden Menschen, damit Niemand lebendig begraben werde*, 1797, Tab I., Fig 1 and Fig. 5.

A Roman doctor of medicine and surgery, Pietro Manni, glorified the German insight in his work on seeming death in 1835 (Fig. 7).

The roots of today’s secularized and fully medicalized hospital death without witnesses go back at least to 1740s. The medicalization of death beginning in the second half of the eighteenth century was, however, marked by remarka-

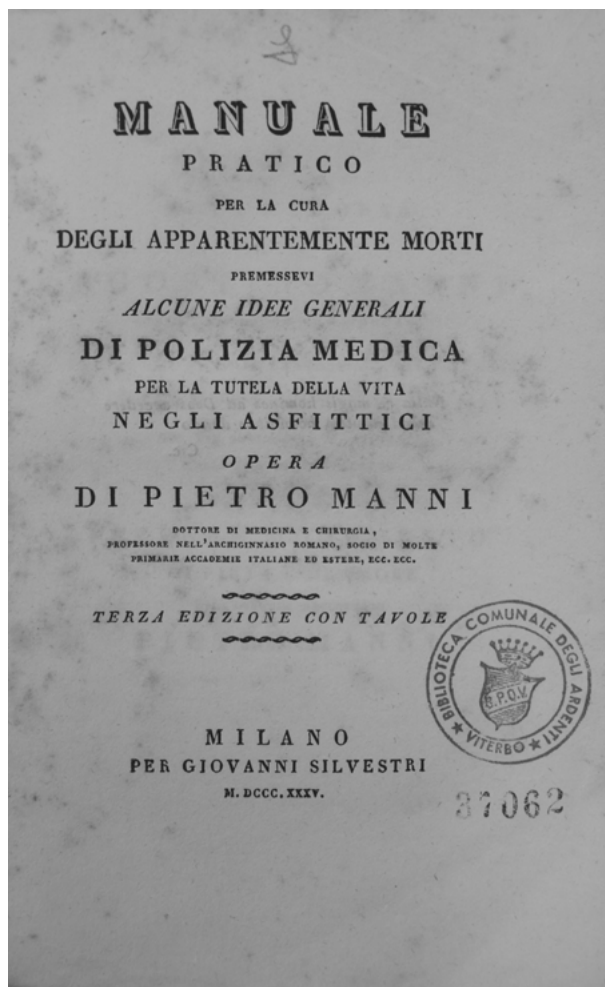


Fig. 7: Frontispiece of Pietro Manni's *Manuale pratico per la cura degli apparentemente morti premessevi alcune idee generali di polizia medica per la tutela della vita negli asfittici*, 1835 ("È comune a molte città della Germania una costumanza piena d'umanità, e sarà gran bene si facesse generale fra noi. Il defunto portato alla parrocchia è collocato in una camera nettissima e di una dolce temperatura, sopra morbido e fornito letto. A ciascun dito si intromette un anello, il quale per mezzo di un filo di ferro termina ad una serie di campanelli che danno uno stridentissimo suono per qualunque piccolo movimento. Un custode è sempre presente per apprestare pronto soccorso in caso di bisogno, e il defunto si tiene in questa situazione, finché non incominci a dare indizio di putrefazione. (...) Negli Stati Austriaci ottimi regolamenti furono pubblicati che possono servire di modello a questa parte di medica polizia." See Pietro Manni, *Manuale pratico per la cura degli apparentemente morti premessevi alcune idee generali di*. 10–11)

ble paradoxes. The pioneers, in their effort to rationalize and reduce the fear of dying an agonizing death, assisted in the birth of the collective nightmare of the seeming death. Their followers, several decades later, in an effort to protect the community from noxious vapors of dead corpses, finished the job of separating the worlds of the living and the dead, and greatly facilitated the process of secularization of death.⁷⁰

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